

**Television for Women: Generation, Gender and the  
Everyday**

**Study submitted in part fulfilment of the requirement  
for the award of PhD**

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**March, 2014**

**To be awarded by De Montfort University, and  
undertaken in collaboration with the University of  
Warwick.**

**Sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Research Council**

## **Declaration**

I declare that this is my own, original work and that all sources used have been cited.

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## Abstract

This study is part of the AHRC funded project “A History of Television for Women in Britain, 1947-1989”. The research is based upon the data gathered from interviews carried out with thirty geographically and generationally dispersed women about their memories of watching television in Britain between 1947 and 1989. I have used generation and gender as analytical categories, and have paid particular attention to the role of memory work in this type of historical research. This thesis aims to build upon previous work which has investigated the connection between generation and interaction with popular culture, but which has not theorised those relationships (Press, 1991; Moseley, 2002).

The shifts and, indeed, continuities in the lives of different generations of British women are considered to gain a sense of the importance of generation in the production of identity. Significant differences arose between generations in terms of reflexivity and around questions of quality, value and taste as generations intersected with feminist and neoliberal cultures at different life stages. What was particularly interesting, however, was that despite the dramatic social change wrought by this post-war period, the narratives of women of different generations were surprisingly similar in terms of their everyday lives. Their memories largely centred around domestic relationships, and the women’s role as mother was often central to these.

Following my investigation of the significance of motherhood to women’s production of gendered identity I consider the moments which disrupted that pattern and where women are enabled to conceive of an identity outside their familial role. Talk around pop music programming and desire had generational significance in the production of individual identities, again pointing to the importance of generation as an analytical category.

Parts of this thesis have been previously published as articles in *Screen* and *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture* and as a book chapter in *Cinema, Television and History: New Approaches*, edited by Laura Mee and Johnny Walker. These are included in full in the appendices.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my daughters, May and Martha, for the patience they have shown me over the three and half years that it has taken me to complete this research. You both continue to be an inspiration and a joy. Thanks to my parents, Pat and Stuart, and my father in law, John, for the continuous supply of generously offered childcare. I know it has not always been easy. My supervisory team Helen Wood, Rachel Moseley and Tim O'Sullivan have given me more time and extended my knowledge further than I could ever have believed possible. I thank them all for their efforts, optimism and ability to never make me feel (too) ignorant. Thanks, too, to my project colleagues Helen Wheatley and Mary Irwin who have both doled out support and encouragement at times when it has been much needed. Special thanks to Helen, Helen and Rachel, too, for taking what was a big chance on me as a PhD student. I'm eternally grateful for the opportunity you have offered me. My thanks must also go to members of the Midlands Television Research Group for stimulating conversation which has informed some of the content of this thesis and has made me think outside the boundaries of my own research. My postgraduate colleagues in the CATH centre, Laure Mee, Jilly Boyce Kay, Charley Meakin, Cat Mahoney and Caitlin Shaw, all deserve thanks for the cake, support, laughter and more fun with Facebook message stickers than anyone should be able to have. I don't know what I would do without you all. Thanks also to my departmental colleagues Steve Chibnall, Jo Whitehouse Hart, Jim Russell and Stuart Hanson for help and encouragement. My eternal thanks go to the thirty women who generously gave me their time and memories. Without their help, this thesis would never have existed. Finally, thank you to Mike for believing that I could do it before I did.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

When I first started this research, I thought that it was going to be a very traditional audience research project concerning particular gendered texts and genres, considering how generic shifts occur across generation. I believed its cornerstone would be conversation about the programmes which had particularly resonated with women and which they saw as being ‘for them’. In fact, this thesis has become something quite different, instead examining the ways that thirty British women of different generations have talked to me about the role of television in their everyday lives, the way that the medium has installed itself as a staple of that everyday and the very significant ways that this relationship differs across generations. In talking around television the women I spoke to said much about their role in the domestic sphere and the family and how stable this identity has been across the second half of the twentieth century. My historical audience research has asked women to recount their past viewing, and throughout their narratives the women I spoke to persistently placed both the technology and themselves firmly within the private domestic sphere, often incorporating their own subjectivities into broader “family” identities. What I present here is an analysis of how those conversations around the medium give meaning and value to their domestic roles, with television becoming a space to enact value and identity, and how these outcomes might be influenced by their generational positioning.

Television has always been important in my own life. I grew up in a traditionally gendered British home in the sense that my father worked and my mother stayed at home. It was a less traditional British home for the first seven years of my life, which were spent in various nations in the Middle East. English programming was absent from the television broadcast, and my televisual diet was restricted to *Sesame Street* and Bollywood films, which I consumed avidly with my mum. The television was always on even though frequently we had the most limited understanding of what was being broadcast. When we moved back to Britain in the summer of 1983, I discovered British children’s television, and it is no exaggeration to say that it rocked my world. The television was still always on, and I spent that whole summer glued to it, mouth slightly open as I gazed upon the wonders that were forthcoming, all that television that had

been specifically designed for me as a child. I greedily consumed every morsel, even the programmes that were for a much younger audience. My parents may have hoped that it was a brief phase and that in future I would spend the summer holidays playing outside, but they were to be disappointed. That summer spent consuming classic British childrens' programming like *Why Don't You?* (BBC1, 1973-1995), *Bagpuss* (BBC, 1974), *Let's Pretend* (ITV, 1982-1988) and *Chockablock* (BBC, 1981) set me up for a lifetime of viewing, and a career as a researcher for a commercial media research organisation.

I came to this doctoral research through the AHRC funded project "A History of Television for Women in Britain, 1947-1989", which had a very specific focus on the "for" rather than "by" in its understanding of what is meant by "women's television". While a significant body of extant work attends to the relationships between television's position as a domestic technology and the nature of gender roles and relations, this has typically proceeded with a contemporary focus, certainly in the British context. A few significant pieces of work have pointed to British women's historical viewing (Hallam, 2005) and to the inadequate attention paid to the history of women's television (Leman, 1987; Thumim, 2004; Moseley and Wheatley, 2008). However, surprisingly little work has considered how this relationship might have shifted during a period which is often acknowledged, whether implicitly or explicitly, as one in which gender relations and domestic organisation underwent a radical overhaul. The period of investigation encompasses the return to sustained television broadcasting in 1947 following its hiatus during the Second World War, and continues through to 1989, when exclusively terrestrial broadcast television ended. This is a significant era in terms of British television history, taking in as it does the end of monopoly and the introduction of independent television in 1955, BBC2 in 1964 and Channel 4 in 1982. The period is also significant from a sociocultural perspective: the United Kingdom witnessed the reorganisation of family life during the post-war period of austerity, the creation of the welfare state, the emergence of a new consumer culture during the relative affluence of the 1950s, the women's liberation and civil rights movements, the shadow cast by the iron curtain and the seemingly unstoppable march of Neoliberal politics.

The project's aim, then, was to begin a feminist historiography of women's television in Britain during this period which, despite the feminist origins and agendas of Television Studies, has as yet barely begun. It sought to uncover and write into history those women's programmes that had been excluded from histories of the medium through an

approach which incorporated archival production and textual research, alongside the audience research which I carried out. The glimpses of programming from the period made available by archival work carried out by my project colleague Mary Irwin suggest that there have been shifts in content, modes of address and representations of gender. In addressing the question of how social change was recognized and negotiated through television genre and audience address, Irwin has considered a range of programming beginning with early magazine shows produced by the BBC's Women's Programmes department in the 1950s and 1960s, (*Leisure and Pleasure* [1951–54], *Wednesday Magazine* [1958], and ITV's *Morning Magazine* [1955]). Her work has gone some way in highlighting the work of women previously marginalised in predominantly male-focused industry histories, including Doreen Stephens, the head of the new BBC women's programmes department in 1953 and key figure in the development of the provision of television for women at the BBC, who is rarely mentioned in histories of early television (Irwin, 2011 & 2013). Irwin has also attended to the dramas and sitcoms that acknowledged the important, and often difficult, role played by women working outside as well as inside the home in the 1960s. These include *The Rag Trade* (BBC, 1961–63), *Compact* (BBC, 1962–65) and *The Liver Birds* (BBC, 1969–78; 1996), as well as the romantic sitcoms and popular costume dramas of the 1970s and 1980s which made up so much of what is often assumed to be 'women's television': *No, Honestly* (LWT, 1974–75), *Just Good Friends* (BBC, 1983–86), *To the Manor Born* (BBC, 1979–81; 2007) and *The Mallens* (Granada, 1979–80)). Her work has examined the discourses through which British television has explicitly addressed women.

However, little is known about women's early memories of such television viewing, or whether these 'women's programmes' resonate beyond the initial moment of viewing, despite prevailing common-sense and academic assumptions about the feminisation of the medium. My audience research was intended to interrogate the programmes which the female audience viewed as speaking to them in some way as well as their memories of the experience and context of that viewing. Its importance lay, as part of a project with an explicitly feminist agenda, in giving voice to 'real' women, as opposed to inferred, theoretical women of much cinematic and historical research, in the construction of 'their' history, while also capturing the memories of those older members of the historical audience for women's television before they disappear.



Historical and cultural mythologies gather around television viewing, often relating to “big moments” (Doane, 1990). The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 is one such example, leading to nostalgic and popularly mythologised memories around memories of communal viewership and the role of the coronation in expanding the take up of television sets into the home. The first man on the moon and the assassination of JFK are similarly mythologised as moments where television intervenes in the ‘real world’, bringing with it something which disrupts the everyday. Less attention has been paid to how historical audiences have engaged with the everyday role of television. Audience research is more often concerned with the meanings made of specific texts (Ang, 1985; Hallam, 2005) or with capturing a particular, contemporary moment in time (Morley, 1986; Kim, 2009) than with a more longitudinal investigation of viewers’ relationships with television and how those relationships shift and slip over time. Youna Kim’s investigation of generationally dispersed Korean women’s navigation of television identities, for example, does not interrogate their historical memories, but only their current positions as viewers. That vast swathe of historical “ordinary television” (Bonner, 2003) which makes up the majority of most individuals’ viewing experiences, and more particularly the significance of the domestic context in the continuity of that historical viewing, is largely ignored.

Television is sometimes described as “moving wallpaper” (Liebes, 1998; Livingstone, 2007; Nesbitt-Larking, 2007). In audience research, where television, domestic contexts and memory work intersect has been somewhat dismissively referred to as “wallpaper memories” (Bourdon, 2003), characterised as having less significance than other, more public, recollections of television. Such an association with wallpaper speaks clearly to television’s domestic status which, in turn, lends itself well to considerations of the everyday (Spigel, 1992; Silverstone, 1994; Scannell, 1996). In her work on the relationship between television and home in 1950s America, Lynn Spigel considers the growth of electronic culture alongside the social history of post-war family life to demonstrate how, over the course of only one decade, television became such an intimate part of everyday life. Her work indicates the duality of television as both a mediator between home and wider community and also as an agent for change within the domestic space, chiming with the body of work on television and the everyday which points to a similar duality (Spigel, 1992). Roger Silverstone, for example, points to the “ontological security” (Silverstone, 1994:17) supplied by television in its provision of ritual and routine for the everyday, but also to the transformative role of the media in

extending the reach of home, what can be accessed from within that home and how different experiences and influences can be admitted to the domestic space.

Despite these suggestive connections very little attention has been paid to the role that television plays in the development of everyday lives over time. I suggest that the sociological Life Course perspective offers an interesting means of identifying how this relationship between the domestic, the everyday and television develops. Described as “the study of biography, of history, and of the problems of their intersection with social structures” (Mills, 1959:149), the Life Course perspective reflects the distinctive social and historical changes experienced by members of particular generations. Just as gender and race shape identity, so too does the aging process and the influence of the social factors which exist at each stage of this process. By plotting the women’s responses against Erik Erikson’s stages of psycho-social development (Erikson, 1963) I am able to track for the first time in the British context changes in relations with television both across generation and between generations.

### *Thesis Outline*

In Chapter Two I conduct a review of the literature in the field, considering extant audience work in both contemporary and historical contexts, American work on television, gender and social history, identity, female spectatorship and the generational aspect of television memories. This review indicates that, while there has been research on women’s television and its viewers, this work has largely concentrated on the present, and has not explored the socio-cultural factors in how this relationship has developed, nor has it fully engaged with a nationally dispersed historical female audience. In Chapter Three I position my own research within the wider field of audience studies, making a case for historical reception research of this kind. I also explore memory and performance, two aspects of audience work that have complicated my analysis of the interviews and consider how these, combined with my own position as researcher, have created a very particular type of interview data. Finally, I discuss my sample in detail, outlining the recruitment process and introducing the thirty women who were kind enough to give me their time and their memories.

The first two discussion chapters, Chapters Four and Five, lay out the foundations upon which the remaining chapters build. Chapter Four discusses generation, one of the central aspects of my research design. The inclusion of generation as a social category for analysis is rarely applied to the history of television audiences or to the

industry itself, so here I discuss the numerous different ways that the social histories which create generations cut across aspects of television reception. The generational distinctions outlined in this chapter form the foundations for the remainder of the thesis. The nuances and differences make a strong case for a more regular inclusion of generation as a category of analysis for understanding the changing nature of everyday practices, and underline the importance of generation to this type of historical research. In Chapter Five I expand upon generational and gendered attitudes to taste and distinction to indicate how both come together in the formations of taste. I include an outline of Pierre Bourdieu's typology of taste (Bourdieu, 1984), while also noting the limitations of his work when applied to television. Television's central role as a marker of cultural value is examined, with attention paid to questions around quality, distinction and identity performance. I give particular attention to four interviews with women from working class backgrounds which were instructive in their attendance to questions around taste, distinction, judgement and value.

The three subsequent chapters discuss the female experience first introduced in Chapter Three in greater detail and from different positions and life stages. In Chapter Six I turn my attention to the specifics underpinning the women's life stories that I have collected, with a particular concentration on how memory and nostalgia feed into their biographies. I attend to the life stage which many of the women used as the central object of value and judgement during the interviews: their role as mothers and the place that this offered them within the family. This position became the framework through which the majority of the women I spoke to chose to recount their lives, with a marked similarity of female experience narrated across generations.

Chapters Seven and Eight turn to concentrate upon the two areas of discussion which disrupt this pattern. Unlike the previous chapter, which examines the ways women subsume their identities into broader contexts of 'family' within their biographies, Chapter Seven investigates women's adolescent relationship with pop music programming. I examine why this particular genre enabled women to interrogate their adolescent identities as recalled in adulthood, paying particular attention to their identification with female presenters and the access such programmes offered to music, style and culture. Finally, in Chapter Eight, I discuss the relationship between heterosexual female desire and the medium of television. A significant number of women spoke about television that they had enjoyed through the prism of the men, both as actors and as characters, who they had found attractive and taken pleasure

from watching in those programmes. Aside from when discussing pop music programming, this represented one of the few interview occasions in which women spoke explicitly about their own personal experiences of viewing rather than recalling viewing as part of a family/household group. It is interesting, therefore, that desire is the one of the few areas where women were enabled to talk about “television for them”.

Academically, I have come to this research from outside the field of Television Studies, from the very ancillary world of Ancient History and Archaeology, and on a number of occasions I have been asked ‘how on earth are *they* connected?’ For nearly two years I stumbled over my answer before finally realising that what connects these disciplines for me is my interest in cultures. What I hope to demonstrate herein is television’s intimate connection to and formation of a feminine culture.

# CHAPTER TWO

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### *Introduction*

Television Studies' multi-disciplinary beginnings have ensured that the relationship between audiences and television has been a focus of scholarship. The available literature covers a variety of reception research, as told by many researchers using various different approaches. While there has been difference and disagreement between researchers over some of the specifics of the audience's interaction with media, there is a broad consensus of heterogeneous interpretation. The subject of qualitative audience studies is not "*the* audience", but a specific and highly contextualised audience. While such work should not make claims of generalisation it can, however, use the specific case study to gain a better understanding, or "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of media practices. Understanding gained from qualitative reception studies can offer more information about the wider processes of engaging with media than can be limited to those studied.

My own audience investigation is interested specifically in women's relationship with this very domestic medium and how this may have changed, or otherwise, over time. I have proceeded from an assumption that the audience is a plural one, and that audiences make their own meanings and readings of television texts. Whilst earlier models of communication reception research were based on a 'transmission model', Stuart Hall's proposed model of mass communication highlighted the significance of active interpretation (Hall, 1973). Hall's model noted that decodings do not follow inevitably from encodings, and gave the "decoder" of the text a role that was as significant as the 'encoders' role. David Morley's parallel research project on the audience of the current affairs programme *Nationwide* (BBC, 1969-1983) provided an empirical groundwork to Hall's theory, and lay out some essential aspects of a new style of audience research. Morley suggested that the determinist aspect of psycho-analytical work on the spectator implies that certain psychic processes are universal, producing a similarly universal experience (Morley, 1981). The *Nationwide* Study instead suggested a means by which each individual viewer is situated within a set of specific circumstances, and that it is from this specific situation that they engage with

media texts. As such, the huge body of research which emerged from the mass communications tradition of media harm, for example, is irrelevant to research such as mine and will not be covered in this literature review. I will instead concentrate here on three major themes which emerge consistently throughout the literature around the television audiences. These themes are: how the historical audience has been imagined in scholarship thus far, gendered television consumption and viewing pleasures and ethnographic style studies of the contexts of viewing. In limiting my review to these issues, I can isolate the areas around gender, genre and generation which have thus far been neglected and which I will seek to unpick and expand upon in the thesis which follows.

### *The Historical Audience*

What we term 'history' can have occurred five hundred, fifty or five years ago, but there is a marked difference between the 'older' history of kings and queens, of peasant rebellions and religious upheavals and the 'newer' history of, for example, television. The 'old' history is presented to the scholar as a completed product to be revisited and re-analysed with fresh eyes and theories. New evidence may occasionally come to light, but the act of analysis is typically applied to old sources in new ways. The 'new' television history, however, is most definitely a history that is still under construction. The historical television audience may be dwindling, but it is still there to consult. Important source material is still available to be recorded. Yet the opinions of the 'real' British historical audience is often absent from academic work, despite the proliferation of current audience research in the field of Television Studies.

This is not because the historical audience is viewed as insignificant or irrelevant. The importance of acknowledging the historical audience is strongly advocated by Richard Butsch, who draws attention to the changing audience from theatre, through radio and on to television reception. He warns against perceiving audiences as static when, in fact, they vary in identity over time and location (Butsch, 2003). He suggests that it is through reception responses to television programmes that we can come to understand audience practices rather than media effects, trace changes over time and recognise the diversity of an audience. His greatest concern is that in the study of television's history there is a danger in dealing only with moments of innovation or noteworthiness when, in fact, the seemingly unremarkable viewed over a period of time through audience narratives will illuminate significant shifts both in the attitude of the addressed and changes in the address of the medium.

In my own approach I have used generation as an analytical category, considering it as both a cohort and a life stage. Erik Erikson's stages of social development provides a framework for my life stage approach. Erikson sees each phase of psycho-social development as characterised by a conflict, of which the outcomes success or failure will determine future life course and choices. While greatly influenced by Sigmund Freud's psychosexual phases, Erikson instead emphasises the roles that culture and society play in an individual's development. The stages he notes which are most useful to my research comprise School Age Childhood, for which the conflict is between industry and inferiority, Adolescence (identity versus role confusion) and Early Adulthood (intimacy versus isolation), Middle Adulthood, when the conflict takes place between generativity and stagnation and Maturity (ego integrity versus despair). Success leads to feelings of usefulness and accomplishment, while failure results in shallow involvement in the world (Erikson, 1959).

The generational theme has been undertaken previously. In her work on women's relationships with the screen idol Audrey Hepburn, Rachel Moseley undertook interviews with two groups of women. The first group encountered the actress in their teens and early twenties during the 1950s and 1960s, while the second group constituted younger women who discovered Hepburn at the same age during the later decades of the 1980s and 1990s (Moseley, 2002). The historical and generational aspects of this research demonstrated the subtle changes over time highlighted by Richard Butsch. The women in the earlier group viewed Hepburn as a princess figure, an appropriately demure role model to emulate in a conservative time, while the women in the latter group saw her as "the woman who managed to have it all". The younger women were also noticeably more media literate, choosing to discuss the star in more post-feminist terms.

Andrea L. Press's work on female viewers in the United States also drew attention to the differences that can exist between generations of female television viewers (Press, 1991). She found that older viewers had experienced the arrival of television as a technological intervention in their world which permanently altered the prevailing social patterns. The younger women in Press's sample instead saw television as part of their connection to their culture and, in some cases, of their familial collective experience. She argues that by examining generational attitudes we can gain a measure of how the women viewing pre-feminist television compare to the attitudes of women who were viewing after the advent of feminism. This comparison offers an indication of the

significance of feminist ideas in culture at large. So, for example, when talking about the 1970s action series *Charlie's Angels*, Press found that the older women were more likely to enjoy the depiction of working women without perceiving the overt sexualisation of the female leads. The younger women, however, were more critical of the appearance and sexuality of the Angels, which they found demeaning. Additionally, Press found that although the younger women did not consciously desire the lifestyles depicted in the pre-feminist programming, they did demonstrate an affectionate nostalgia for a time that seemed more pleasant and civilised than their own. Both studies highlight the importance of gaining insight across generations to the understanding of the development of a medium, and the reception of such. These generational understandings of what it means to be a woman, inherent in both Moseley and Press's interviews, are replicated to some extent in my own interview data. However, my research has indicated that generation in relation to visual culture is more important than either Moseley or Press suggest, resulting in a much stronger theorisation which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

Often the historical audience is constructed in academic work without, it seems, consultation. In *Make Room for TV*, Lynn Spigel considers how television became such an integral part of people's daily routines in the course of the 1950s in the US. She uses an analysis of women's publications such as *Better Homes and Gardens*, *American Home*, *House Beautiful* and *Ladies' Home Journal* to inform her research, moving the study of television history away from questions of industry, regulation and policy and into the domestic sphere (Spigel, 1992). Her work considers issues such as how the arrival of the television set changed women's working day and even the layout of their home, alongside a consideration of the address to the at home female viewer. As such Spigel begins to address the "human experience" angle of history. Janet Thumim's attention to the domestication of television in Britain over the course of the 1950s, seen by many as an attempt to recreate Spigels' work in a British context, presents a 1950s British female audience without giving voice to that audience. Thumim identifies two approaches to researching the historical audience, acknowledging that while neither is wholly satisfactory, when used together they may start to give a more complete picture of the audience in the 1950s. She firstly constructs the audience through textual analysis of the programmes that were broadcast during the period, and secondly analyses industry publications such as *The News Chronicle's* television review, *TV Times* and *Radio Times*, publications which were selected for their role in informing and constructing the audience of the time



(Thumim, 1995 and 2004). It often seems, however, that Thumim overlooks the salient issue around whether audiences necessarily choose to watch or enjoy a programme simply because it is broadcast and makes assumptions about the audiences for certain programmes. Thumim's methods can only construct the subject of woman rather than canvassing the voices of 'real' woman, creating a tendency to view the audience as a homogenous mass. As such, Thumim's construct of the 1950s female audience is created in a top down manner rather than bottom up, a position more akin to Film Studies where textual analysis dominates more than it does in Television Studies. Ultimately, the audience history which she presents is one of address rather than reception.

While Spigel also uses the terms of address as her focus, she is aware of this limitation and is more successful at moving television history into the sphere of reception. Both works draw out the address of these early daytime programmes, showing how they construct the female daytime consumer and indicating the domestic importance of television to women. What they cannot access is how the female audience experienced that address, what meanings they attached to it or how they read through the texts as my interview data does.

Increasingly, work in the field recognises that textual analysis alone cannot illuminate the historical audience as it does when carried out in conjunction with and viewed against audience studies. Henrik Örnebring laments the fact that historical accounts of the development of the media have commonly been written from institutional perspectives which sideline the audience as an "aggregate mass that can and should be measured" (Örnebring 2007:170). That is, the historical audience is constructed in terms of what they are expected to have done rather than what they have *actually* done, which is certainly the case with Thumim's work. His own audience research into the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1954 made extensive use of the Mass Observation Archive, which is an effective means of demonstrating the plurality of the Coronation's audience at the time of broadcast. His research reveals that while the media at the time portrayed the Coronation as a universally well-received occasion of excitement, a significant number of the views contained in the Mass Observation Archive expressed ambivalence or dissent. The limitation of such a historical source is that it is presented to the television history scholar as a *fait accompli*. There is no opportunity to add further illumination or detail on the opinions expressed in the archive, and the programming which is dealt with has been selected and curated in the

past by a third party. Additionally, in focussing on the Coronation his research is dealing in those 'noteworthy' television moments that Richard Butsch warns about.

Jackie Stacey has also identified problems with the historical audience in film studies, and particularly how best to access such data. She suggests that the focus on the institutional factors which shape a spectator's reading, such as letters pages which have already been interpreted and framed by editors of magazines, rather than 'actual' spectator responses, creates a narrow selection of views. She also highlights the problems of memory and individual's construction of the past, which can mean that respondents further narrow their own selections of what they share with a researcher (Stacey, 1993). Her own audience research into women's memories of and relationships with Hollywood stars in the 1950s (Stacey, 1994) sought the opinion of the audience through a series of letters written to her by women in response to a letter published in *Woman's Realm* and *Woman's Weekly* magazines. A follow up questionnaire was also used in some cases to gain further information and clarification from participants. A different approach to the cinema audience is undertaken by Annette Kuhn in her exploration of audiences of the 1930's (Kuhn, 2002). In a series of oral history interviews with cinema-goers, Kuhn constructs a history which can, in many ways, be seen as a pre-history of my own work. There are interesting parallels, particularly in terms of the importance of 'place' (i.e. the cinema) to 1930s audiences which can be seen to be replaced by the importance of the 'domestic space' in my own interviews in relation to television.

In 'Television Memories and Cultures of Viewing, 1950-1965', Tim O'Sullivan used interviews to tell the story of how real people first brought television into their homes and how it was positioned there (O'Sullivan, 1991). Like Stacey, he also recognised that memory can be socially shaped, with his interviewees providing memories which had been conditioned and reshaped by popular culture's current desire for nostalgia of the recent past. Among other points, it emerged that the purchasing decision was usually made by the male breadwinner and that making such an expensive purchase in the 1950s and 1960s was connected to discourses of gender, class and consumption. O'Sullivan's use of an oral history approach is unusual in the British context, and marked what he hoped was a shift from textual analysis to studying the social contexts of television viewing, and the wider dynamics of cultural consumption (O'Sullivan, 1999:159). In a similar study carried out in France, Jerome Bourdon proposes a four category typology of television memory comprising wallpaper, media events, flashbulbs

and close encounters (Bourdon, 2003). To some extent, his typology begins to account for television's role as a medium deeply embedded in everyday life and the family, and he also draws attention to the changing nature of broadcasting and what this might mean for memory work carried out with television. Emily Keightley's work deals explicitly with the relationship between media and remembering practices (Keightley, 2011). Her interviews with white British women demonstrate how women's personal identities are shaped through practices of remembering using televisual resources and begin to point to the importance of accounting for the gendering of memory work.

As I will cover in greater detail in Chapter Three, the notion of what oral history is can be a tricky subject to pin down. A recent study from Finland has taken O'Sullivan's work as its starting point to create what the authors define as a unique oral history, albeit one that is written, of the social significance of television in the everyday life of Finns from the 1950s up to the beginning of the 21st century (Kortti and Mähönen, 2009). Respondents completed written reminiscences about television in their lives, encompassing memories such as first television viewing experience, choosing television programmes and television's impact on hobbies and social intercourse among others. Using John Ellis' periodisations of television (Ellis, 2002), the study identified the different periods of Finnish television as 'the era of scarcity' (1956-87), 'the era of availability' (1987-2001) and 'the era of plenty' (2001 onwards). From the gathered reminiscences the research found that despite technological and cultural changes in the history of Finnish television, most of the fundamental features of television habits remained constant, and that family and gender-related viewing had not changed to the extent the authors had expected. The study is similar in its scope and its aims as the research carried out for this thesis, and the findings in terms of the stasis of domestic organisation and gendered viewing are interesting. However, how far written reminiscences can be termed 'oral history' is debatable. The oral history approach is intended to stimulate a flow of consciousness which is a different process to that undertaken when creating a written reflection. However, the study's commitment to tracking change over time shows interesting findings in terms of the lack of change in attitudes and viewing habits that they noted, which resonate with the data collected from my own oral history interviews.

### ***Audience and Gender***

#### *Gender and Taste*

Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of society is based on the movement of capital when used by social players through social space. Bourdieu proposes that capital exists in forms other than economic, proposing a model of cultural capital which exists in three different states: in an embodied state in the form of durable dispositions in the mind and body; in an objectified state in the form of cultural goods such as books or paintings; and in an institutionalised state which might take the form of academic credentials (Bourdieu 1986:243). Like economic capital, cultural capital can be accumulated or lost, invested or distributed within a specific social field, which is the place of competition between individuals or institutions all of which are competing for the same stake (Bourdieu 1986). Power is achieved by the ability to confer or withdraw legitimacy from the other participants. Each field generates a specific *habitus*, a system of dispositions and a 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu 1990, 66), the means by which we acquire ways of being through practice and socialisation rather than through conscious, formalised learning, throughout our whole lives. One way that Bourdieu suggests that *habitus* might be manifested is the way an individual chooses to present their aesthetic disposition. Inherent in this presentation is the depiction of their status. Such dispositions have been internalized at an early age and are suitable for their particular social position. The tastes of the dominant class are socially understood to be more desirable.

While Bourdieu tends to approach such questions from a class position, Andreas Huyssen notes that mass culture has long been associated with women while authentic high culture belongs to men, stating that for some art and literature critics "mass culture remains the other of modernism, the specter that haunts it, the threat against which high art has to shore up its terrain" (Huyssen, 1986:9). That is, mass culture is not viewed as desirable. Early feminist responses to mass culture were equally hostile (for example, Greer 1970), viewing it as a means of reproducing patriarchal definitions of femininity. From this denigration of feminine culture grew an increased feminist defence of "women's genres". These genres comprised more than just television, encompassing romance fiction, female magazines, soap operas, and melodrama among others. An increased feminist re-engagement with the mass cultural aspects of femininity gave rise to a new body of work which investigated traditionally devalued cultural forms and their role in women's lives.

### *Soap Opera*

As a result, for some time research into television audience and gender became pre-occupied with soap operas, a genre strongly identified with the female audience. Much of the work is notable for its invocation of the audience in the study of the text. The reasons posited for female appreciation of the genre are many and varied. Charlotte Brunsdon notes that, although denigrated, to understand and appreciate the genre the social reader has to possess three extra textual competences. Firstly an understanding of the genre rules and conventions, secondly a knowledge of the serial's characters and history and thirdly an ability to engage emotionally in moral codes of personal conduct (Brunsdon, 1981). The last of these competences she judged to be socially constructed as particularly feminine in character, suggesting that this is the reason women are drawn to the open-ended, emotional storylines of soap opera. Tania Modleski similarly draws attention to the narrative structure of the genre, which she suggests replicates the repetitious and distracted activities housewives were carrying out in the home, hypothesising that this would enable housewives to relate to the fragmented and cyclical patterns of soap operas (Modleski, 1983).

Dorothy Hobson indicates television's division along gender lines, with the feminine realm constituting fictional programming which offers an opportunity to emotively connect with characters or situations which might happen in their own lives or as a fantasy alternative to their own daily experiences. The masculine realm is instead largely constructed of factual reporting of current affairs or action and adventure programmes (Hobson, 1980). Hobson's interviewees were clear that the feminine realm of television was frequently denigrated as "less respectable" by husbands who held their own viewing pleasures to be somehow more worthy. Many of the women in her study highlighted news programming as something they avoided because they found it depressing, and stated they would leave the room when it was on. This would appear to indicate not only an acceptance that their own viewing preferences were in some way less worthy, but also that their male partners had a right to watch what they wanted to.

In her later study *Crossroads: The Drama of Soap Opera*, Hobson found further evidence of the low status attributed to female viewing preferences, supporting her earlier research into the viewing pleasures of housewives (Hobson, 1982). Many of the women involved were accepting of their husband's dismissive comments about the programme. Others were unashamed of their enjoyment of the soap opera, and others also recognised the viewing differences between men and women, but even so

seemed to accept that the genre of soap opera had less value than programmes with a more masculine address, as identified by Hobson in her earlier study. In later work Hobson used her previous research to demonstrate how women use television programmes as part of their discourse on their own lives, using events in shared viewing (such as soap operas) to narrate their own stories. She argues that it is the discussion after viewing which locates television programmes as part of popular female culture (Hobson, 1990). There is some accord here with Mary Ellen Brown. In her work on the genre, Brown found what she termed 'resistive readings' of soap opera appreciation, and concluded that there is an active pleasure for women viewing soap opera. Watching soap opera in groups and talking about soap opera is an affirmation of their connection to a women's culture that exists outside of, and often unacknowledged, by the dominant culture (Brown, 1994).

Ien Ang's study *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination* (Ang, 1985), was not intended to be specifically about women. However, that 39 of the 42 letters she received were from women is itself noteworthy and indicative of the differing relationships men and women may have with the genre, as well as the extent of its influence and importance to their lives. Ang identified two concepts in the female audience's reading of *Dallas* which accorded well with Brunsdon's assertion that emotional engagement with moral codes of conduct is a feminine competence. Ang's presentation of "emotional realism" states that viewers express their understanding of 'the real' at a connotative level, rather than at the level of denotation. It is, Ang argues, this emotional resonance which makes the fiction real and pleasurable to viewers. She also identified a 'melodramatic imagination' which emerges from a willingness to face life from a certain psychological standpoint, and leads women to vicariously identify with characters such as Sue Ellen or Miss Ellie, even though in doing so they take up a position of powerlessness.

Clearly, despite the multitude of possible reasons soap operas are popular with women, some major points emerge and similar themes develop over this period of research. The idea that those genres identified as feminine are denoted as lower status than those characterised as masculine is also prominent in much of this work, as is the ridicule of women's viewing choices by male partners, as raised by Dorothy Hobson's work on *Crossroads*, but also in some of the ethnographic research I will discuss in the following section. Throughout my interviews, it became clear that discourses around taste had indeed been internalised by the women I spoke to on both class and gender

lines. Interesting differences emerged between working and middle class women in terms of how they presented their viewing and themselves, but also their disregard for programming that was classed as 'for women'. These issues will be given greater consideration in Chapter Five.

### *Factual programmes*

More recently there has been increased interest in gender differences in factual genres such as talk shows, lifestyle and reality television. Like soap opera, these genres are generally denigrated as low quality, having low production values, being cheap to make and they have similarly found themselves categorised in the realm of the feminine.

In her research into factual programming for the British Office of Communications, Annette Hill carried out a comparison of British and Swedish viewers (Hill, 2007). When she investigated self-reported viewing pleasures, the results broadly seemed to follow the previously assumed pattern. Men were far more likely to watch news programmes than women were (71% of men versus 60% of women) evoking Hobson's finding that women would leave the room when the news was on. Women watched more lifestyle programming (19% of women versus 8% of men) and were significantly greater consumers of reality television (17% of women versus 6% of men). One statistic that was surprising, however, was that women were more likely to view documentaries, with 22% of the women claiming to watch them as part of their regular viewing, while 16% of the men claimed the same. This represents something of an anomaly in the traditionally received wisdom that men's interests are 'deep' whilst women's are 'light', and would benefit from further research.

Current research into female attitudes to factual programming displays many of the same themes that emerged from media research of ten or twenty years previously, certainly for women who are married and are responsible for running their own home. The vilification of the talk show genre is highlighted by Helen Wood, who sees it as an extension of the traditional denigration of feminine modes of speech, and contends that while men are seen to take part in rational, serious, political debate, women are associated with the emotional and invisible realm of the domestic. The talk show gives the domestic sphere a mainstream public voice (Wood, 2009). The women she interviewed were very clear in their assertion that their husbands did not want to watch talk shows. Some would actively turn the television over if they happened to come home and find a talk show broadcasting. This was identified, by the women

themselves, as being because men do not like to talk, and do not like the “real world”, even though many of the women acknowledged that their husbands were intrigued by women’s magazines. The gendered address of the genres was clear, and Wood asserts that although these programmes are not fictional, they ‘talk’ about the same world as soap opera. It is the private world, rather than the public world addressed by more heavy weight news programmes, and the perceived friendliness and sensitivity of the presenters was important. The women also indicated that they carried out household chores around their morning viewing, essentially listening rather than attentively viewing, expressed feeling guilty if they watched television without also carrying out another task and identified the television as ‘company’, all of which echo the findings of the research outlined previously.

In Mexico, Aimée Vega Montiel investigated housewives’ relationship with television news. Again, common themes in female modes of viewing arose, particularly the concept of “distracted consumption”. She found that most of the women she spoke to *did* watch television news every day, but liked to watch the evening news as the introductory summary informed of the day’s main events in a few minutes. For in-depth coverage the housewives preferred radio news because the activity of listening did not demand their exclusive attention, but also because they attach low status to the news programming which they believe to be overtly influenced by the interests of TV station owners. Where they enjoyed news discussion programmes, such as *Hechos*, a popular Mexican newscast broadcast since 1994, the sensitivity of the presenter was important to them, echoing the findings of Wood (Montiel, 2006).

Reality television poses a problem to those hoping to study gender preferences as it is such a diffuse grouping of so many genres. As Annette Hill describes it:

‘A number of distinct and historically based television genres, such as lifestyle or documentary...have merged with each other to create a number of hybrid genres that we now call reality TV, or popular factual television’. (Hill, 2005:55).

Hill demonstrates how different the various strands of the genre are, with some afforded higher status than others, which are typically denigrated. Her research does not make specific gender distinctions, although in an exchange between two of her male interviewees, Peter described his viewing experience of a travel reality series, ‘It’s real life, innit, I mean’. This is redolent of Wood’s female interviewees’ feelings about



daytime talk shows and their insistence that men are not so interested in real life, indicating again that taste cannot be consistently predicated on gender lines.

Studies such as David Gauntlett and Annette Hill's *TV Living: Television, Culture and Everyday Life* have suggested that gender is now irrelevant, concluding that today sexual division of viewing pleasures and preferences may have become over-determined in society at large. They are particularly critical of academic's continued reference to soap opera as a "women's genre" (Gauntlett and Hill, 1999). The continued academic interest in the gendering of genre outlined here, however, indicates that while soap opera may have been left behind, academic study has moved on by searching for new women's genres, such as the talk show and reality television. Of Hobson's 1981 study, Shaun Moores invokes Pierre Bourdieu's work on matters of taste, and states "It is therefore essential that the 'two worlds' of TV are considered in opposition to each other, because the women in Hobson's study classify themselves by what they don't like as well as by what they do." (Moores, 1993:38). Ann Gray has warned that we need to re-assess popular genres and their audiences, citing soap opera as an example that has changed over time as popular Australian soaps such as *Neighbours* and *Home and Away* engaged male and female student audiences (Gray, 1992).

Much of the research outlined here has proceeded from an assumption about women's viewing preferences before then going on to research their relationship with that genre, rather than approaching women with an open question about what they enjoy watching. Julia Hallam's investigation of British women's relationship with Carla Lane's situation comedy *Butterflies* (BBC2, 1978-1983), a programme with a very explicit feminine address, for example, concentrated on women's memory work with only one text. As Ang's work on *Dallas* demonstrated, where a study narrows its remit to one gender defined genre the nature of the audience that chooses to respond is likely to be defined by gender. If we are to gain a richer insight into female viewing pleasures it is necessary to undertake gender audience research which leaves the field of genre more open.

### *Gender and Use*

The domestic space, or 'home', has long been characterised as the archetypal site of everyday life, those moments which are not imbued with any special 'public'

significance. It is the site of habit and repetition and of the cyclical relations of 'everyday time' that have been associated with women and counterpoised to the linear and active time associated with men. In early work on the everyday, the horizons of women were more likely to be seen as limited to the repetitive, habitual and cyclical rhythms of daily time, while men's mental clocks were often seen to tick to the eventful time of the world outside the home (LeFebvre, 1971). In Lefebvre's eyes, repetition is a contradiction to modernity understood as permanent progress and, even, an obstruction to it. For Rita Felski, though, home is the anchor and not the entirety of the experience of everyday life. As such, the boundaries between home and non-home are 'leaky' (Felski, 1999-2000:49), and it is this which serves as the platform for her challenge to Henri LeFebvre's theories of gendered time. Felski's work on gender and the everyday identifies the three distinctive features of how humans experience everyday life. First, it is characterised by a distinctive sense of time, that of repetition. Second, we experience everyday life as a matter of habit; we take it for granted. Third, it is governed by a particular kind of spatial ordering that is 'anchored in a space of home' (*ibid*: 18). As such, Felski argues that repetition understood as ritual enables us to transcend our historically limited existence by connecting us to our ancestry and tradition, arguing that continuity and routine are crucial in early child development and in developing individuality in adulthood. Thus, repetition is not opposed to transcendence but rather an important factor of it.

From an empirical standpoint, the work carried out by James Lull and Dorothy Hobson in the early 1980s was integral in identifying significant differences in gendered relationships with television. The ethnographic studies which have followed have been clear and unanimous in their agreement with these original findings.

In the US, James Lull wrote *The Social Uses of Television* (Lull, 1980) with the help of a team of researchers who spent a great deal of time socially with the families they were researching. He identifies two types of television use. The first is 'structural', in that television is a companion for completing chores and acting as background noise, and the second 'relational', which represents the ways in which audience members use television to create practical social arrangements. These themes occur again and again throughout the ethnographic studies outlined here, with clear differences between genders emerging. Dorothy Hobson's *Housewives and the Mass Media* (Hobson, 1980) identifies a gender-specific meaning of the media within the domestic context. Based on a series of interviews with women in their own homes about domestic labour

and domestic leisure, her work identifies a common theme of broadcasting representing a lifeline to women, a connection between solitary housewives and the outside world. Two points of particular interest emerge from her research. The women did not identify radio or television as 'leisure time'. Instead the schedules of both media helped to create the division of the day around which household tasks could be completed, which is in accord with Lull's 'structural' television usage theory.

With her next study, *Crossroads: The Drama of Soap Opera* (1982), Hobson again interviewed female participants in their own homes. She noticed that the broadcast time of *Crossroads* in the evening coincided with the time that many women were trying to feed their families, and in trying to do two things at once Hobson identified a female technique of 'half watching'. Because the programme was dialogue driven, women were able to listen to it and follow the narrative without having to stop what they were doing to give the programme their full attention. Again the notion of the household as a sphere of work for women is imperative.

Later, David Morley similarly noted that an understanding of what the domestic arena represented was very different for husbands and wives. While the men he spoke to viewed it as their place of leisure, for women it was another sphere of labour where they were rarely off duty, even when they also had paid employment away from the home. His findings echoed those of Dorothy Hobson's earlier studies, particularly in his identification of women as "distracted consumers", carrying out other chores while watching television (Morley, 1986). Both Hobson and Morley found that even in the evening when sitting in front of the television for supposedly recreational time, women would often carry out another activity such as knitting or reading so as not to waste the time, although Morley discovered that women were not exclusively distracted in their viewing and would sometimes watch television attentively in the home if other members of their family were absent. Following his analysis of the television culture in eighteen London homes, Morley viewed media consumption as an on-going power struggle between men and women in the domestic setting. He concludes that how a family decided what they would watch, how decisions were reached on use of recording technology and even how different members of the family chose to watch television were all significant in their demonstration of how gendered power was demarcated within each home. Male derision of female viewing pleasures was again highlighted, and tied in directly with the men in his study appearing to own the power to impose their own viewing preferences upon the rest of the household. Again, this was

because of an implicit sense that their own tastes were in some way more worthy, with comments such as 'I couldn't watch that'. Morley constructed the potent conceit of control over the remote control as the symbol of paternal power.

His research firmly located women within the family context, and he also made interesting discoveries about how women chose to watch television in relation to their children. He found that women would watch television programmes attentively (that is, not in the 'distracted consumer' mode that has dominated research findings) if the rest of their family was absent. One woman enjoyed watching early morning programmes because she could concentrate without disruption and requests for information or extra work. In only fully indulging their own viewing pleasures when other family members were absent, the women in his study were, essentially, ceding power over what to view to their partners and children. Ellen Seiter's research on mothers' relationship with television (Seiter, 1999) also points to these feelings of guilt and abdication of viewing power amongst women who are mothers. The women she spoke to were also keen to position their narratives of viewing within their familial and relational contexts.

Ann Gray's work on VCR technology in the home hung upon the importance of the VCR in illustrating women's technological ineptitude. As Brunsdon argues that the competences required to engage with texts of soap opera are culturally constructed as feminine, so Gray argues that the 'technologically inept' woman is also a culturally constructed social reality. As previously mentioned, she points to the women's ability to work other complex household technology such as cooker timers, washing machines and microwaves as evidence for the contrary, and views this construction as evidence for male domination of the leisure sphere. A handful of the women in the project were happy to remain in ignorance of the VCR timer button, as they perceived that if they could work it that they might extend further extend the range of domestic duties which fell under their jurisdiction (Gray, 1992). Interestingly, a recent Finnish study discovered that Finnish women, especially housewives, did do the timing of the VCR (Kortti and Mähönen, 2009:61), which the authors explained by the fact that household work is more equally divided between partners in Finland.

Like Morley, Gray also found that women gave priority to their partners and children in matters of viewing. Many of the women that Gray spoke to considered the very fact their husband had a job as the only justification necessary for him to take priority of the screen, and when he was not there it was often just easier to let the children watch what they wanted to. In so doing the women were, as in Morley's *Family Television*:

*Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure*, placing themselves at the bottom of the household viewing hierarchy. The same pattern was apparent in organisation of programme recording and video tapes. The men and children often had more designated blank tapes in the first place, or women would give up their own cassettes if there was no free space on those belonging to other family members. Many of the women did not record as much as other family members because they did not have access to a television schedule until their husband came home with the paper and were without the means to inform themselves of what they might record. Others did not record as much because they already had far more recorded viewing than they would ever get the time or opportunity to watch, because viewing priority was not afforded to them. In many cases, the women just did not seem to have as strong a relationship with the VCR as their male partners did, having been largely uninvolved in instigating its purchase and frequently viewing it as 'his' technology.

Gray asked her female interviewees to ascribe the colours pink or blue to different areas and appliances of the home. The approach gives a distinct impression of how household chores are divided along gender lines, both in terms of how traditional the areas ascribed as 'female' or 'male' were, such as pink kitchens and blue garages, but also in the dialogue which arose from the exercise. The women Gray interviewed were frequently surprised when they realised the extent of the pink within their homes, even though many had previously thought their partner made a more significant contribution to the completion of household chores. Gray notes that there is a significant difference between responsibility for domestic chores and assisting with domestic chores, concluding that responsibility is often "unspoken, assumed and with the woman" (Gray, 1992:42). This colour coding of household technologies also highlighted the fact that many of the women had little or no understanding of how to programme the VCR, with the timer switch typically being 'blue' although the VCR as a whole was more typically 'lilac' and, therefore, shared. Gray notes that these same women were able to use time setting functions on cookers which men typically did not or could not use, and she highlights this as a glaring example of the gendered division of labour within the home. While concentrating on the 'timeshift' aspect of VCR recordings Gray found that women's relationship with hired movies and recorded material was distracted in the same way that it was for broadcast television. It was still being used as a background to task completion if, indeed, they found the time to view their recordings at all, as Gray found that half of the women she interviewed had trouble finding the time to view recorded programmes or to plan recordings. Additionally, there was a sense that some

of the women felt less guilty about watching real time television than recorded material. Television broadcasts programmes whether it is being watched or not, but using a video tape implies a guilty decision to view which is totally under her control (*Ibid.* 215).

I want to end this section with an observation of more recent television viewing and associated scholarship, which falls outside my period of study but which highlights the importance of attending to developments over time, rather than continued focus on a moment in time. More recently both genders are increasingly multi-tasking with technology in front of the television (Ofcom, August 2010), whereas the studies outlined here note this “half watching” or “distracted consumption” as a female preserve. Watching television itself has become something very different, with the traditional image of the family unit watching television together becoming less normative. Multiple television sets in homes and streaming television as it is broadcast on computers means that families do not have to watch the same programme. Furthermore, it is possible that modes of address and reception are changing. Sonia Livingstone is an unusual voice within this field, giving attention to the historical changes that have occurred post-war, such as the decline in street play and the retreat to the home, and considering how these have contributed to the changes in media use by children as it is understood by their parents (Livingstone, 2010). Attention paid to research into interactive television viewing makes bold claims about the active and therefore “good” media practices of using television, versus the negative and “passive” practices of simply viewing television without taking the long tradition of work into active television audiences into account (Kapor and Weitzner, 1993). This oversight is endemic in media studies, which so often seems to look for change and innovation, without considering the value of entrenched behaviours or tracing patterns of media consumption over long periods. Livingstone’s nod to the historical background of the changes that her interviewees recount enables her to understand not only ‘what’ audiences make of the media, but ‘why’ they make sense of it in that way (Livingstone, 1998). Shifts in the context of television viewing or of the gendered organisation of the domestic context of that viewing as contextualising factors such as gendered work patterns change could easily be missed or misinterpreted by audience studies if the historical and generational remit of reception research is to remain so narrowly focussed.

The marked difference in attitude to the home between genders is crucial to these studies. The idea of the domestic arena as a place for leisure for men versus the site of

another place of work and duty for women is central to the different modes the genders employ in their television viewing. For men, the act of viewing is a form of recreation, while for women the media punctuates their day while they do other chores. These attitudes have a bearing not only on how they watch television but also what, when and with whom.

The oral history perspective of this research positions it differently to other work on the British historical audience of television by chronicling the “human experience” over time referred to earlier. In one respect the study seeks to create a historical resource which will contribute to the construction of television history as a whole and also to open a door to dialogue with the historical audience while it still exists, and to gain clarification and amplification of memories as they occur through the use of gentle prompting. Often the very act of having a two-way conversation around a subject can encourage remembrances which might not reveal themselves in a one off letter. In the same way that the television documentary *The World at War* (ITV, 1973-1974) is particularly illuminating and involving because of the first-hand accounts of war-time experience given by interviewees, a study like this can similarly be enriched by the first-hand remembrances of television audiences. Historical audience studies with a British bias often deal with film studies (Moseley, 2002, Stacey, 1994). An integral difference between film and television is that television is viewed as more commonplace, less of a noteworthy occasion, and therefore in danger of slipping through the cracks identified by Butsch. This thesis will serve to retrieve some women’s “everyday” recollections of television, illuminating the domestication of the medium and changes in the relationship between a historical female audience and their reception of television over time.

## Chapter Three

### Method

At times in the writing of this chapter the methodological implications of audience research have seemed almost over-whelming. At each point that I have thought my work on the chapter may be complete, another point of contention has occurred to me. It has been evident from my discussions with PhD colleagues who are specialising in different types of research that method is not such an all-consuming aspect of their own work, and that many PhD students find their method chapter the most boring to write if, indeed, they even write one at all. This has certainly not been my experience. If this chapter has been difficult to write it is only because I have been so fascinated by the various methods and disagreements in the world of audience research, and have at times allowed myself to become mired in trying to find solutions and truths for each and every bone of contention.

In the chapter that follows I position my own research method within the wider field of audience research, which has traditionally made the case for historical reception research of this kind. I will also explore some of the aspects of audience work that have so complicated my analysis of the interviews and how these, combined with my own position as researcher, have created a very particular type of interview data. Finally, I discuss my sample in detail, outlining the recruitment process and providing brief biographies for the thirty women who were interviewed.

#### *The Research Question*

While questions around interview power dynamics and performance have received substantial critical attention, many of the critiques of reception studies have been more reticent in their address both to how method makes data and also how the initial research question might frame the outcome of a study. Perti Alasuutari notes that textbook "how tos" operate from a general assumption that research begins only once the hypotheses have been laid down, when in fact the hypotheses themselves are the result of a prolonged research period (Alasuutari, 1993). To this I would add that the empirical part of the research process that follows, and the data that arises, is directed by those hypotheses. Some feminist scholars have suggested that an open approach to interviewing enables respondents to feel empowered to raise the issues and topics which they feel are important to the subject of study (Oakley, 1981b; Finch, 1993). I



agree with this, with the caveat that this will only work if the overarching interview focus and question is sufficiently open. Interviewing a respondent about what they like about a pre-conceived academic assumption about what constitutes a feminine genre, such as soap opera, will elicit a very different response to a question which broadly asks what television they have enjoyed watching. The specificity of the former approach can, as I addressed in the previous chapter, create an environment in which the researcher has narrowed down the research question to their own particular interests. The research approach that I have used here is more in the style of Janice Radway's work on women reading romantic novels (Radway, 1984). Radway's research operated almost back to front, hearing first what the women said, and then constructing her analytical framework around their words, allowing the analysis to be led by the interview data rather than imposing a theoretical framework upon the data before it comes into existence.

### *Oral History*

As I established in the preceding chapter, the great quantity of research on contemporary audiences is counterbalanced by a marked paucity of historical, empirical audience research. The question of how to access a historical audience is fraught with complications. I did not design this research project. Although I have had room to create interview scripts and analyse interview data as I have wished, the initial design for thirty oral history interviews is one which I inherited from the funding bid submitted by my colleagues on the "A History of Television for Women in Britain, 1947-1989" project. While I have had cause to worry over certain aspects of that design, such as the all-female sample which I will further attend to later in this chapter, I have never questioned the value of talk to television analysis.

Trying to pin down exactly what is meant by 'oral history' is a frustrating process. In her reconstruction of women's lives during the Second World War, Penny Summerfield points to the multiplicity and complexity of definitions of oral history, settling upon the definition by Hitchcock and Hughes as the most succinct: 'Oral history might be said to be the study and investigation of the past by means of personal recollections, memories, evocations, or life stories, where the individuals talk about their experiences, life-styles, attitudes and values to a researcher' (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989; quoted in Summerfield, 1998: 32). In addition, and important to my own understanding of the term, are Ronald Grele's stress on the significance of the method as a 'conversational narrative' (Grele, 1991: iix) and Alessandro Portelli's suggestion that oral sources 'tell

us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what they now think they did... Subjectivity is as much the business of history as the more visible “facts”...’ (Portelli, 1981: 104).

Following a definitive ethical approach outlined in Oral History Society guidelines, my research proceeds from a position where I, the researcher, am present with my research subject. Much disagreement exists over whether this is the most ‘equal’ method by which to research an audience, despite what ethical approval I may have received from my institution. Audience researchers who have favoured written testimony over oral sources have often defended it as a method which both offers greater control to those being studied and as a means to eliminating the problematic aspects of interview performance (Ang, 1985; Stacey, 1994), but these are naïve arguments. A written document of this type is created for a specific purpose in the same way that an interview text is. As such, performance has not been eradicated at all, merely transformed into performance with a different character. A letter specifically written for an academic researcher is equally as likely to present a particular version of events which the researched views as appropriate for the audience of the letter as an academic interview might. Furthermore, to use the written word as a means of obtaining information may in fact narrow the potential selection of views and positions. For many the notion of entering into an academic study is off-putting enough, but the prospect of subjecting a written document to academic scrutiny may put many more off responding to such a call for participants.

Disagreement around the value of written and oral sources is also apparent in oral history, and much academic work on the subject has been occupied with defending the credibility of the method against the perceived unimpeachability of written documents. Trevor Lummis notes that those questions which are often demanded of oral evidence by historians could equally be applied to documentary evidence, but seldom are. He particularly draws attention to issues around how ‘pure’ we can consider this type of memory work to be, how general or typical the information is, and why the information has been created. He suggests that because of their contemporaneity, documents assume a “suspicious air of trustworthiness” (Lummis, 1987:13). This disagreement continues through discussions of whether to transcribe or not and what the final product of oral history should be. Is it the transcript (the written document) or the recording (the oral evidence itself)? (Grele, 1985). A similar struggle is at play at the heart of the oral/written discussion at the beginning of this section, and that audience

researchers who favour a written audience testimony, as in the case with Julia Hallam or Jackie Stacey's use of letters or Kortti and Mähönen's construction of 'oral' history with written diary entries, in fact see it as more credible in some way.

In fact, to privilege written testimony over oral or observational work limits the opportunity to gain further clarification of interviewee's comments as they arise thereby removing their "voice". Additionally, it offers no opportunity to observe the audience while they struggle to make their memories coherent which can be particularly fertile ground for making connections between what is said and what is acted. The body language and behaviours that we all execute in our own personal spaces create useful clues which add flavour and detail to an interview, and provide ancillary information which might later prove to be interesting. Dorothy Hobson's important "half watching" theory, for example, was formulated while interviewing a woman in her home as she tried to watch *Crossroads* at the same time as she fed her young children (Hobson, 1982). I found that women often wanted to be interviewed in the same chair they would normally sit in to watch television, and I gained useful insights into the ways they organised both their viewing, domestic arrangements and family dynamics. Many of the older women, at some point during our conversation, produced their television listings magazine from the side of 'their' chair and explained to me how they got the magazine when it came out and went through it to find the programmes that they specifically wanted to watch. These were important indicators of social relationships and domestic control which were specific to the older women and implicitly linked to the diffusion of the messages of feminism which had given younger women other means by which to express these relationships and grasp or maintain control. This feature of the interviews will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

The many ways that television is talked about and is used to facilitate life narratives has been a focus in media studies where the function of the medium's conversational after-life in terms of gossip and women's talk is well attended to (Brown, 1994; Hobson, 1989; Gillespie, 1995; Wood, 2009). As such, the oral work that I have elicited here is an appropriate means of examining people's relationship with television, which exists in talk in a way that it does not exist in writing. The importance of orality to the television experience is central to my research, and will be revisited throughout the thesis.

Oral history's increased popularity can be attributed to questions around who has traditionally written history. As historians have begun to interrogate areas of interest that are inadequately served by the extant written sources which have traditionally had

a political focus, there has been a new requirement for a source which addresses these 'everyday' aspects of the social world. That is, social history, particularly of everyday life, domestic routine and workplace. What proponents of oral history have particularly stressed is how the method provides important evidence for how non-elite communities construct and modify cultural meaning over time (Tosh, 2010). When employed, therefore, the method can be used to change the focus of history by opening up new areas of enquiry beyond the focus of political and economic histories (Thomson, 1998).

Criticism of oral history as a method gathers around questions of the representativeness of the sample, as it does for all qualitative work of this type, but also a lack of understanding of what to do with oral history once it is completed or what constitutes the finished product. Much of the literature I read on oral history has accused the method of being insufficiently theorised (Grele, 1985), although there does appear to be a move towards greater theorisation in more recent years (Abrams, 2010).

Proponents of the method would not have to go far to engage in appropriate theorisation. The life course perspective in social science, with its concentration on life narratives and semi-structured in-depth interviewing, deals with many of the issues around which Oral Historians lament a lack of theorisation. Indeed, it often appears that there are questions around the semantics of the term "oral history" which are rarely broached. Increasingly, I feel that Oral History is actually the same thing that social scientists might call an 'in-depth semi-structured interview', but one with a historical aspect and interrogating past behaviours rather than more current interests. The advice to start an oral history with broad initial questions, followed up by more detailed ones in Oral History 'how to' manuals (Thompson, 2000; Lummis, 1987; The Oral History Society) are remarkably similar to those for qualitative researchers in the social sciences (Seidman, 2006). While I would argue that the historical aspect may lead people into a greater narrativisation of their lives, I do not see that the methods are very different. Trevor Lummis suggests that it is less a question of method and more of central focus (Lummis, 1987). However, there is a fundamental flaw in his suggestion that social science life story work emphasises the subjective world of the interviewee while Oral History's focus is gathering information about historical and social structures. In fact, it is impossible to separate these spheres as they are constitutive of each other. Here the life course approach complements my approach particularly well, dealing as it does with "how developmental pathways reflect the distinctive social and historical

changes experienced by members of particular generations and cannot be understood apart from this social and historical context” (Cohler and Hostetler, 2002). Despite my reservations, I will continue to refer to my research throughout as “Oral History” because the term does effectively distinguish my work as a retrospective study of past viewing practices and social relations rather than the contemporary audience studies which currently proliferate in the field.

Much has been made of the method’s efficacy in reducing the power imbalance inherent in the interview situation, by prioritising “voice” (Ryan, 1992; Sangster, 1994). This efficacy is questionable, and I would suggest that questions around power still exist in this type of interview work. The researcher still has the power to frame the research question, and has the power to interpret the women’s words. The researcher transcribes the interviews as they see fit. In this specific research project most of the interviews flowed well once they got underway, but some were heavily directed by me purely because some people have less capacity to talk about their lives and, specifically, the category of television than others.

### *Research Method*

I recruited thirty geographically and generationally dispersed British women by placing adverts and press releases in local and national publications with diverse readerships and also by approaching the Women’s Institute through my mother who is a member. An article written about the project “A History of Television for Women in Britain: 1947-1989” by Chris Arnott for *The Guardian* also contained a call to interview which prompted further responses (Arnott, 2011).

I called each woman to explain my research, to verify that they were interested in taking part and to check, as far as was possible, that none of the women who progressed to the interview stage were vulnerable in any way. From these conversations I identified three women who appeared vulnerable; one who seemed extremely anxious about meeting me anywhere or giving me information about herself, one who became very distressed when I called her because she could not recall my advert or contacting me about it and a third who was eager to help me but had just discovered her husband was terminally ill. After numerous reassurances from me that it was absolutely fine if she did not proceed with the research, we eventually both agreed that she had other more pressing matters to deal with at that time. Many of the women who contacted me were in fact happy simply to recount a few memories either by

email, letter or over the phone rather than taking part in an interview. From the pool of women who were interested in taking part in a full discussion with me I selected the thirty who represented the best spread of age groups over 40 and geographical regions of the United Kingdom. I designated these regions as Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, North East England, North West England, Central England, South East England and South West England. Sample details, including a more in-depth description of the recruitment process, will be dealt with at the conclusion of the chapter.

Most of the interviews were carried out face to face, either in women's homes or in a quiet, public place where they felt more comfortable with meeting a stranger. I carried out some of the interviews over the telephone either due to the distance I would have had to travel to interview them face to face, as was the case with Fiona who lives on the Isle of Mull, or because the women felt more comfortable being interviewed in that way than by meeting with a stranger in either a public or private location. The face to face interviews were more satisfying to carry out, and were also richer in detail. It was easier to establish a rapport with those women I visited than with those I spoke to by telephone, and it was also easier to give the women the space they needed to answer questions. In the earlier telephone interviews I was aware that, without visual clues to whether an interviewee had finished speaking, I was often cutting in thinking they had finished talking when they were only pausing. To address this problem in the later telephone interviews I delayed my own speech until I was certain that the women had stopped speaking, but this itself contributed to a slightly stilted character to the interviews, which never felt as if the conversation or the women's own thoughts flowed as freely as they did in the face to face interviews.

I modelled the interviews on the Oral History approach as laid out in literature from the Oral History Society which received approval from the De Montfort University ethics board. In each section of the interview I asked the women a broad question such as "can you tell me about your first memories of watching television?" and gave them the time and space to explore their own interpretation of the question and resulting response. If I required more detail on specific programmes that they mentioned, or modes of viewing I would then ask more specific follow up questions (appendix 1). I designed the first two questions of the interview to enable talk about television to occur in a more common place way as part of the *lingua franca* of social interaction without the added complication of trying to recall historical viewing. In these questions I asked

about why they had responded to my advert and what current programmes they enjoyed watching.

As I moved into the first part of the interview proper I broke their television viewing down in to life stages, which I characterised approximately as childhood, teenage years and adulthood, although the exact meanings of these time frames altered depending upon the age of the interviewee. Women in their eighties, for example, would not have watched television during childhood and women in their nineties might not even have been exposed to it during adolescence. For these older women I referred to 'earliest' experiences rather than "childhood" or "adolescence". These questions explored themes around programming that they had particularly enjoyed during each stage, and why they felt that those programmes had provoked a particular resonance, who they watched television with, how they watched and who controlled what they watched. In all interviews this was the most successful section. The life stage approach worked well, giving the women a familiar and clearly understood framework upon which to hang their memories, and most of the women were able to talk at length about television in this way. I modelled this approach on the life course perspective which particularly addresses the question of how individuals make biographical sense of the different social identities that they occupy over the course of their life and how these processes are shaped (Mills, 1959; Elder, 1994). This method creates a particular mode of thinking about life chronologically and, as such, will have shaped the responses I received in terms of age and viewing behaviour.

In the middle section I moved away from a life course perspective, probing more temporally general questions around the ways the women thought that television had influenced their actions and choices, who their television role models were and what other people had thought of their viewing choices. This section worked reasonably well, although some of the concepts involved were not as well understood or familiar as the life stages organisation of the previous section. The idea, for example, that role models might come from television or that the medium might have been influential required some discussion and explanation, particularly with the older women. By and large the interviewees were less independently eloquent here, and my own direction and input was more noticeable than it had been in the first part of the interview.

In the final part of the discussion I ran through two separate lists of programmes which had been broadcast during the period 1947-1989. The first of these was generated by archival work carried out by my project colleague Mary Irwin, and comprised a list of

daytime and early evening programmes that had been created and produced specifically for women in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s (appendix 2). The second listed various popular light entertainment and drama programmes of the period in question (appendix 3), which had emerged from lists that the project team compiled through talking to female friends and relatives. These lists were intended to act as a memory prompt, which I introduced at the end of the interview to create a different type of memory work specific to the texts that women might recall rather than the contexts of viewing those texts. I used programmes which the project team had uncovered through archival research with the hope of uncovering whether the women felt a resonance with any of the programmes which they had not mentioned spontaneously during our conversation, and that this might lead our conversation to discussion around why they might have forgotten programmes that had been important to them. In fact, this was the least successful part of the interview process and frequently descended into a litany of comments such as, “yeah, I watched that” or “no, I didn’t like that”, without any further discussion or memory work around the texts. This is highly suggestive that the women were less interested in talking about programmes which did not also stimulate biographical memories. Further, it is indicative of the way that discussion of television programmes came out of personal memories, rather than vice versa, a theme that I will return to in Chapter Six.

The final question I asked was always “is there anything you thought I might ask which I haven’t, or was there anything you wanted to ask me?” I asked this to disrupt the traditional interview power relationship, giving the women a greater level of control over the interview and an opportunity to frame their own concerns or interests around the subject. Some interesting points emerged, with many women asking questions about why I had specified the dates 1947 and 1989 or why I was particularly interested in women’s memories. They gladly took the opportunity to demonstrate that they had considered the implications and background to my research and were engaged self-selecting interviewees.

Once each interview was completed I transcribed it in full, although this was not because I felt a need to create a final written historical document. Traditional criticism of transcription tends to focus upon how it is easy for the researcher to bend the words, devoid of their spoken nuance, to their own will, and this seems to be of particular concern in Oral History work. In contemplating some aspects of the method, Alessandro Portelli notes that “punctuation indicates pauses distributed according to



grammatical rules: each mark has a conventional place, meaning and length. These hardly ever coincide with the rhythms and pauses of the speaking subject, and therefore end up by confining speech within grammatical and logical rules which it does not necessarily follow" (Portelli, 1981:98). Elinor Ochs also draws attention to the difficulty in transcribing non-verbal communication, with particular reference to her own work on child language. She goes on to note that transcription impacts on the generalisability of studies within child language research because transcripts 'influence and constrain what generalizations emerge' (Ochs, 1979:168). Too late did I come to Ochs' work to integrate her suggestions for recording non-verbal communication. I would not claim that I have not fallen into the traps outlined by these, and many other, academics. I am certain that the digital recordings of my interviews, without my own interpretation of pauses and punctuation, will serve historical scholarship far better than the transcripts of the interviews will. It is not correct, however, to infer that transcription should be removed from this type of research. My personal experience of transcription, both during this research project and in my previous career, is that it offers a valuable period in which to re-listen to the interview in painstaking detail, taking time to fully absorb what the interviewee has said away from the intricacies and technicalities of carrying out interview work. There is something about the number of times a researcher might have to pause, rewind and re-listen that represents a second chance to hear the pauses, the uncertainties, the cadences, and to pick up on the contradictions that always exist in an interview that might so easily be missed during the moment of data gathering. In some respects, my use of the written text here can be viewed as an aide to the oral aspect of the research because of the sheer number of times the process made me listen to what the women were saying to me, enhancing the orality of the oral history.

Once all the interviews were completed I marked up the transcripts, looking for themes and patterns. From the data that I collected, I marked the key points of each interview with a series of codes. I grouped these points into similar and broader concepts in order to make them more workable. From these concepts, I formed categories which became the basis for theoretical frameworks. This contradicts the traditional model of research, where the researcher chooses a theoretical framework, and then applies the model to the research question. My chosen position instead takes a middle ground by assuming an "obdurate reality" at the same time as it assumes multiple realities and multiple perspectives on these realities (Miller and Glassner, 1997; Charmaz, 2003). A

strong set of themes emerged across the interviews, and those groupings form the basis of the chapters of this thesis.

### *Performance and Memory*

While it is tempting to view audience testimony as the definitive word on what audiences think, the academic qualitative interview in fact needs to be viewed as a performance text. It does not offer 'truths' to the researcher but a version of truths, represented for that particular moment in time. Academic use of oral histories and other personal narratives, both oral and written, has gained popularity in more recent years, with the gathering of personal narratives increasingly viewed as part of a wider democratic practice and an effective method for retrieving the testimony of groups that have traditionally been left out of dominant culture by putting them at the centre of their own narrative. Yet the centrality of the narrator to their own story gives them a unique platform from which to selectively construct and re-construct their own interview identity, to perform themselves. In these performances, space can be created to rethink and recreate events of the past (Denzin, 2001). This narrative performance establishes a contract; it promises both a performance and an audience. The implications are the differentiation between the present act of narrating and the past act that is being narrated. Personal experience stories such as these are created for the specific research moment and are, therefore made, not found, by the researcher.

### *Performance*

For the wider project I'm working on, which had a very specific interest in the genres and programmes that women have particularly enjoyed watching, these re-creations of interviewee's past selves have proven less useful than they have for my own investigation of historical audiences specifically. Indeed, for any research project that requires empirical data to be 'true' in some way, oral history is not necessarily the means of achieving this. Its usefulness lies not as "a method of gathering information, but as a vehicle for producing performance texts and ethnographies about self and society" (Denzin, 2001: 24).

As I detailed in the introduction, the initial aim of the Television for Women project was to find out which programmes women thought of as 'for them' and to represent women's own voices in the history of their viewing. The oral histories have not

produced a great quantity of this type of information, but instead they have served up a rich set of unanticipated findings regarding the female role and power relations in the home, female adolescent identity and women's own meaning making around being a woman and what 'for women' means to them. For example, motherhood became the main focus of most of the interviews in terms of judgement and value as I will investigate further in Chapter Six. There was a significant performance of gender at play during the interviews in terms of how many of the women positioned themselves in a maternal role to my 'child'. This was iterated through the insistence of many that they collect me from the train station rather than let me find my own way to their home. When I tried to explain that I was not a young student, but a woman in her thirties, a number of the women responded with comments such as "that's how old my daughter is". Performance of their status as mothers and women was also evident in the elaborate lunches or cakes many prepared for me. One woman, Belinda, who professed not to enjoy cooking at all, nevertheless sent me on my way with a packed lunch.

The historical aspect of my interviews has also been problematised by personal narrative performance, and it can be difficult to determine the extent to which the women's testimony is about their past selves and to what extent it is an extension of their present selves, with the additional life experience and wisdom they have gathered over the years projected back onto their personal histories. One such example of this has been through many of the older women's understanding of feminism which in many cases has transformed their re-creations of their historical selves, their domestic routines and their relationships with men. This is a direct effect of the interviewer being an academic researcher working on a project with a specifically feminist agenda. Many of the women in their 70s and older have been very keen to characterise their home lives to demonstrate a gender equality, and in terms of who controlled what was watched on television many of them were insistent that they controlled family viewing matter, even though in most cases this was substantively contradicted at other points in our conversation. To gain a sense of reliability in such interpretative qualitative work, the researcher needs to employ a sensitive reflexivity which allows the reader a lens through which to see the data (Wood, 2009).

Academic interest around interview performance largely focusses upon the performance of the interviewee. I would like to reflect here on my own performance, as the interviewer, during the conversations. In several of the interviews I found myself

claiming to know facts, publications and television programmes that the women spoke about which I had, in fact, no previous knowledge. A large part of this performance was because I was convinced that this is what the women wanted and expected of our encounter. They had contacted an academic researcher and anticipated a certain level of knowledge and expertise, as well as a particular type of middle class intellectual. I was desperate not to disappoint them. I also suspect this concern about disappointing them was borne out of my own feelings of insecurity as an academic. I have not come through the more 'traditional' channels of academia. My undergraduate degree was in the entirely unrelated subject of Ancient History and Archaeology and I have never studied for a Master's degree. My induction into the world of Television Studies has been, to say the least, a steep learning curve and certainly throughout the earlier interviews I frequently felt like an academic pretender, desperate not to be caught out. Although I presumably 'knew' this at some level during the interviews, it was not until quite well in to my period of analysis that I began to fully realise the extent of my own performance.

### *Memory*

A consideration of memory must be central to this type of research, even that which investigates more recent events. The act of interviewing is always about an event that has taken place in the past to some extent. In my research, the time that has elapsed between these women's viewing of television between 1947 and 1989 and then recounting their experiences to me, however, makes the processes of memory particularly significant and, potentially, problematic.

While a large body of work with a long history exists, moving the idea of memory as a straightforward tool of retrieval on to other theorisations of memory as performance, constructive, processual, partial and unreliable (Bartlett, 1932; Hutton, 1988) much of this has often focussed upon traumatic events. The Holocaust has been particularly well investigated (Rapaport, 1997; Zelizer, 1998) as have studies of populations that have been displaced by war (McDowell, 2004; Bougarel, Helms and Duijzings, 2012). These are events that are rendered somehow more 'worthy' of remembering and memorialisation by their extraordinary nature. The vagaries and workings of memory processes when applied to more mundane events, and particularly something as everyday as television, have been paid less consideration.

Memory work involves a set of complex cultural processes which produce identities, or what Jackie Stacey describes as ‘the negotiation of “public” discourses and “private” narratives’ (Stacey, 1994:63). The recounting of memories is not a straightforward representation of events, and its use in interview must be viewed as another element of performance. As such, in the histories that the women have provided, I have a series of retrospective reconstructions shaped both by a nostalgia for a recent past in which a popular version of the period has gained cultural currency (O’Sullivan, 1991) but also by their desire to portray their identities to me in a very specific way. That is, through memory work they can define their present identities against their past selves. This is particularly stark when we begin to consider how people might recall something characterised as so eminently forgettable and ‘amnesiac’ (Doane, 1990) as television. Important questions arise around how our own personal investments shape the memories we produce and how we prioritise what we remember. Additional problematizing issues around television’s own memorialisation of itself (Holdsworth, 2008 & 2011) and how the industry’s choices of what is and what is not repeated might influence memories of what was once watched are apparent (Spigel, 1995).

The varying processes of memory underpin all of the work which follows in this thesis, and I have attempted to consider these at every stage of my research process. Fundamental have been the questions of what type of memory work this type of research engenders and how and why the women I spoke to have stitched these particular, memories of television as a shared medium into their lives. Throughout, I have considered how far the memories they chose to present to me constitute the fullness of their own memories of the past and to what extent they represent the vicissitudes of the present projected onto their past selves, and why they have selected to present those particular memories.

In the analysis which follows this chapter I have, as far as possible, tried to use this type of personal narrative for what it can tell us about power relations within society and the home and the cultural production and re-production of identity and experience. Some of the ‘whys’ will be intensely personal to the women I interviewed and I am unlikely to ever know how far I fully uncovered these reasons. However, the cultural choices that the women made in their curation of the interview content, what they chose to talk about and how, speaks volumes about the way we live, even if the interview text itself is not necessarily historically factual.

### *Conceptual Framework*

My research is part of that wider field of empirical audience research which is concerned with the meanings audiences attach both to what they view and the contexts in which they view it (Hobson, 1982; Ang, 1985; Morley, 1988; Gray, 1992; Wood, 2009). As I suggested in the previous chapter, attempts to construct the audience theoretically can only infer how that audience might negotiate a particular text, but audiences do not always respond to texts in synergy with the expectations of the text's creators. Just because a programme is broadcast, it does not necessarily follow that the audience is interpreting it, or decoding it in the expected way (Hall, 1973). In order to understand the cultural interpretations that audiences might make of television texts, the importance of audience testimony is manifold, as is some understanding that texts and practices are both products of and constitutive of the social world.

I do not claim that interviews offer a full, unedited picture. During the process the researcher usually hears about television viewing rather than observing it, which typically leads to an investigation of the 'rules' and attitudes around viewing television rather than the process of viewing. Helen Wood's text in action work is a notable exception, recording how viewers respond to programmes as they are broadcast rather than as a self-reporting of viewing after the event (Wood, 2009). While this approach cannot work for my research, dealing as it does with a historical audience, it is useful in highlighting some of the ambiguities that can arise with the elapse of time.

Also there are power issues here, although it is not true to claim that these are any greater in an interview process than in other research approaches. To claim that the written word gives greater control to the researched glosses over the fact that it is still the researcher who has framed the initial research question and it is the researcher who will further interpret the researched's own interpretations of events, aspects of research which represent equally strong arenas for power relations. However, I cannot escape the fact that I was in a position of power throughout the interview process and it would be easy, and lazy, to claim that my Oral History approach represents a more democratic method for interviewing because it offers a platform to those populations excluded by traditional historical sources from which to narrate their own histories. For these reasons it has become a popular method in feminist scholarship, which has often been occupied with questions around interview power relationships, allowing women to speak their own knowledge (Ryan, 1992; Sangster, 1994). In her 1981 piece on interviewing women Ann Oakley pointed to a lack of reflexivity or reflection in work on interviewing, particularly in terms of instructional literature, and indicated exactly how

and why many of the traditional interviewing techniques are not suitable for feminists interviewing women. Her examples included the ways that an interviewee becomes constructed as 'passive' and also her assertion that "it becomes clear that...the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship" (Oakley, 1981:41). Penny Summerfield, however, draws attention to the fact that, although the researcher might nurture and assist the narrator's interpretive role, ultimately the work of interpretation and analysis belongs to the researcher and to her alone Summerfield, 1998: 25). Increasingly I have begun to wonder how beneficial concerns around rationalising power dynamics are, and to what extent our attempts to equalise that power actually downplays the researcher privilege which is still at play, but also how the deployment of a reflexive approach might be used to accrue value to the researcher, turning others' stories into their own property, rather than to flatten power relations, "there is a difference between the researcher and the research participant's reflexivity depending on their prior positioning and the resources on which they can draw" (Skeggs, 2002: 368).

During the period that the interview process was on-going, I rarely felt that I had unfairly used the women that I interviewed, mainly because I was riding high on the excitement and adrenaline that such research instigates and also because the women seemed to genuinely enjoy the process. On one occasion, however, I did feel guilty when I had to leave the interview promptly in order to make it to another one on time. The woman I left clearly would have liked to continue talking to me after the interview. She was lonely and I offered company and conversation, even though this was as a means of achieving my own ends. After this interview I stopped doing two interviews in the same day so that I could give each woman the amount of time she wanted for our entire exchange, and not just for the recorded interview.

Beverley Skeggs writes of her debt to the women she studies, pointing to their operation as her 'dialogic other' and enabling her to challenge academic colleagues who did not recognise their own entitlements (Skeggs, 1997:168). Away from the excitement of interviewing and into the analysis I began to feel my own debt to the women who had aided me quite acutely and began to feel increasingly uneasy that I had used them for what information they have given me essentially to further my career. At other times I have felt uneasy that I am unlikely to ever be in touch with

these women again, even though many of them left me with offers of proof-reading and other help which at the time they were offered I glibly accepted. In my own experience of trying to address power relations I tried to be as open as possible about myself, my life and, to a lesser extent, my own feelings on television programmes. However, many of the women I interviewed for this project were very taken by the fact I am a mother myself and were interested in my relationship with my children and I am certain that the interviews that have been produced here are a product of my current life situation combined with their own. If I had done these interviews at a different point in my own life the women might have spoken to me about different things, but I also might have picked up on different things in what they were saying and that I would have spotted different common themes for analysis. I do not think it is entirely coincidental that the themes I have spotted have been around motherhood and adolescent identity.

To some extent, the romanticisation of Oral History ignores the fact that we are often 'trading on our identity – as a woman, a professional' (Finch, 1984: 78) to obtain the information we want. In light of Finch's warning, I have to question how far my openness was driven by power equality and how far I was, albeit unintentionally, trading not only on my own identity as a mother, a wife and a daughter, but on the women's desire to be useful and helpful. A number of women cited 'helping' as their main reason for responding to my advert, specifically suggesting that they hoped if their own child was in my position that someone would also help them, and increasingly I felt discomfort that I had exploited their need to be useful. On listening back to the interviews and re-reading the transcripts I have to conclude that I did use my status as a woman to establish a rapport and to attempt to be someone that the women felt they could connect with, albeit unintentionally. Perhaps this is inescapable in a research situation such as this where I am not only the observer, but am also 'inside' and actively participating in the culture I observe (Oakley, 1981b).

In the time I spent with the women, through our telephone and email communication beforehand, and also through the gratitude I felt for the help that they offered me, it was inevitable that I would begin to develop relationships with them, and I suspect the level of investment made by both researcher and researched in an interview is probably greater than in a written letter. Although the characters of these relationships were all different, I do experience an underlying discomfort in writing about them, these women who so generously gave me their time, their experiences and their hospitality.

### ***The Sample***



In this section I will provide details of the recruitment process, including numbers of responses to each advert, and will also consider the success of recruitment in terms of diverse age groups, ethnicity and geographical regions. Finally I will introduce the thirty women I interviewed through brief biographies.

### *The Recruitment Process*

Recruitment for the project was undertaken with the assistance of the De Montfort University Press department. In total, seven publications carried some sort of call to interview whether it was paid for or took the form of a press release or article. Adverts for *Woman's Weekly*, *Saga* and *The Lady* magazines were costed into the original project funding application. Each publication carried a paid for advert which was published in April 2011. These publications were targeted because of their gendered and generational appeal. The copy for each was the same (appendix 4) although the artwork varied depending upon the publication. My colleague in the Press department approached a number of further magazines and local newspapers with a press release (appendix 5). To the best of my knowledge, this press release was included by three magazines, which were *Yours*, *TV Times* and *Lincs Rural*. Further press coverage arose from an article written by Chris Arnott for *The Guardian* about the "A History of Television for Women: 1947-1989" project.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the press advertisements I advertised my research at the project's public engagement events at the Leicester Phoenix, the Coventry TV Pop Pop-Up Shop and the BFI,<sup>2</sup> as well as through the De Montfort University intranet and through the Hedgerley branch (South Buckinghamshire) of the Women's Institute. In total, 69 women contacted me and the responses prompted by each lead are summarised below (Table 1)

Table 1: Number of women Responding to Call to Interview

The Guardian	15
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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2011/sep/05/fifties-women-daytime-tv>

<sup>2</sup> The project undertook three major public engagement events. The TV Pop Pop-Up Shop showcased some of the project's findings about music television alongside archive material from the popular press at the time in an empty Baker's Oven shop in Coventry city centre over the month of May 2012. We invited the public to come in, enjoy the exhibition and hopefully share some of their own memories about music programmes. 'Career Girls on the Small Screen', took place at the Phoenix Arts Centre, Leicester in October 2011, and led to a larger-scale but similarly themed event at the National Film Theatre on London's Southbank in July 2012. These events included screenings of women's programmes from the archive, talks and introductions by the research team and audience discussions with the researchers and industry practitioners about the programmes we screened and the issues they raised.

Woman's Weekly	15
Saga	12
Yours	7
TV Times	5
Lincs Rural	1
The Lady	3
De Montfort Intranet	4
Impact Events	3
Women's Institute	4

### *Sample Size*

I interviewed thirty women. This was a sample size that I inherited from the initial planning for the project *A History of Television for Women in Britain, 1947-1989*. The number was selected for various reasons, not least of which is the constraint of this research as the basis for a PhD project. Thirty people was judged as a sample that could be managed by one person and analysed over a definitive period of PhD completion, but is also large enough to provide rich sample data. Other similar research projects have used a similar number of respondents (Gray, 1992; Moseley, 2002), and I decided to continue with this sample size. My previous research career in the private sector had made me aware of how time-consuming the interview venture can be, and I was keen to manage the completion of my PhD research to time, but also to keep it as a small scale, qualitative study rather than becoming a larger survey-scale piece of research.

The use of smaller samples marks the move away from the mass communications effects approach, which sought to interview more people, quantitatively and towards a qualitative approach favoured within cultural studies. Work by Gitlin (1978) and Hall (1980) demonstrates how the effects tradition had mis-represented social nature and the impact of mass media by actively ignoring the subjective aspects of human experience when, in fact, it is precisely those subjective aspects which give human interaction with media its meaning because subjectivity is the cornerstone of human experience. Qualitative work need not aim to make generalizable findings about the sample group, but rather look "to explain a particular set of circumstances to put phenomena in context and to provide interpretations which explain all the elements involved in a situation rather than focussing on one set of relations" (Geraghty, 1998: 154).

### *Social Categories*

The early 1990s witnessed a new critique within feminist media studies about the essentialism and methodological implications of concentrating upon gender as an analytical research category. Ien Ang and Joke Hermes have noted the problematic caused by a lack of theorisation about how gender and reception of popular culture are related, indicating the role of reception analysis in continuing this problem. They argue that in most reception analysis gender is presumed to precede cultural preference and behaviour, meaning that the concept of gender is constructed as constant and consistent when, in fact, being or becoming a woman or man requires continuous work (Ang and Hermes, 1991). They suggest that "any feminist standpoint will necessarily have to present itself as partial, based upon the knowledge that while some women sometimes share some common interests and face some common enemies, such commonalities are by no means universal" (*Ibid*:109). This post-structuralist perspective warns that "the dangers of easy categorization and generalization [...] are greater than the benefits of a consistent particularism" (*Ibid*: 108).

I feel a need to defend my own all-female research sample in the face of this body of work. In terms of Ang and Hermes' criticism of 'essentialist' research, Ellen Seiter notes that while Ang and Hermes construct media subjectivity through post-modern theories of ethnography, but rarely through empirical study. She draws attention to the conflict between theoretical frameworks, modes of doing research and methods, suggesting that when it is applied to 'real people', post-structuralist theory does not work. (Seiter, 1999:29). Certainly, audience research has continued to be drawn upon within the field because it produces findings which are 'obviously valid', despite post-structuralist suspicion of empirical subjectivity work (Alasuutari, 1999). Like Ellen Seiter, Helen Wood also notes the conflict that exists between theoretical frameworks and empirical work, but goes further to suggest that it is 'not incompatible to test subjectivity as an unfinished process in which gender is constantly in flux as an unstable category, and yet still carry out empirical research, because these observations, to make sense at all, must be discernible in lived and real subjectivities.' (Wood, 2009:111).

Ann Gray's defence of her approach hangs on the observation that "women have too often been subsumed into consideration of 'audience' with sparse attention paid to the specifics of their daily lives and media consumption" (Gray, 1992). While agreeing that social categories can create crude generalisations which may obscure differences,

Gray shows how those categories also enable differences to be revealed. More importantly, to my own research at least, is that as a social category gender exposes "profound and persistent commonalities which would seem to exist *between* women and which form the basis of social critique" (*Ibid*: 30, my own emphasis in italics). I would go further and suggest that in studying both men and women, there is a danger that the research will conform to older research paradigms again constructing woman as merely a comparative 'other' to 'normative' man. The opportunities offered by a research approach involving only one gender gives greater scope to compare women to other women thereby highlighting the essential differences between women that arise from demographic profiles outside gender. In further utilising a life course perspective, I have also created an environment in which continuous negotiations of gender identity can be identified.

While gender forms the basis of my sample, building upon a limited catalogue of previous work which has demonstrated generational differences in attitudes to and understanding of popular culture (Press, 1991; Moseley, 2002) I have included generation as a central category to further indicate that not all women 'speak' from the same position or construct themselves in the same way. Women in their sixties are slightly more represented in my sample than women of other age groups, and this is because I received so many more responses from women of this age. Over half of the letters, emails and phone calls I had were from women in their sixties. I think there are many reasons for this. I suspect younger women maybe did not view themselves as the target of my study. Certainly many of the younger women who got in touch expressed concern about possibly being 'too young'. Similarly, the older women, those in their eighties and nineties, seemed to have difficulty understanding why anyone would want to talk about television which was not a concern shared by women in their sixties, fifties and forties. This indicates a shift in the understanding of the medium as a valid topic for analysis and conversation. An important aspect of my audience research in terms of the project "A History of Television for Women in Britain, 1947-1989" was to capture the voices of older women before those voices disappeared. In fact, as I will address in Chapter Four, older women were much more hesitant and less articulate in their television talk. Throughout this thesis, I often feel as though I am talking about the oldest generation of women as 'lacking' in various ways; lacking in reflexivity, lacking in articulacy around television and lacking in interest in the medium at all. Sadly, the content herein which relates to these women is slimmer. Those women in their sixties, however, are old enough to remember life before television, but were young enough to

absorb the new technology when it came into their home. While their mothers may have viewed the medium as a 'technological intervention' (Press, 1991) for these women it was a source of wonder, of entertainment and of company.

As far as possible I have tried to construct the sample from different class and regional positions. These aspects were less successfully fulfilled than the generational character of my research outline. Mobility, both physical and social, made it difficult to pin down women's positions. Many of the women I spoke to had lived in numerous places over my period of study and had also migrated from a working class upbringing to a middle class adulthood. The limitations of a self-selecting sample are writ large here. My sample largely identifies as middle class and although, at first glance, I have a good geographical spread of regions it became clear over the course of the interviews that women had lived in multiple locations. In some cases the women had also lived abroad for significant periods of my research period, a factor which did not emerge during the research process. The interviews have corresponded largely to the women's life stages and it is through this prism that I will have to consider class and/or region throughout. While these categories have not been stable over the life course, gender for these women was.

Class and region were at least represented to some extent, which was not the case for race or sexuality. I did not receive one single response to my call to interview from ethnic minority women and none of the women I interviewed identified themselves as being anything other than heterosexual. Furthermore, the De Montfort University press office approached magazines such as *The Voice* and *Asian Eye* with the press release that they took to other publications. Neither chose to run it. This is highly suggestive of a different relationship between audiences and television within ethnic communities, in addition to the accepted academic concerns around who chooses to contact an academic researcher. Ofcom's special report Ethnic minority groups and communication services of June 2007 found that while ethnic minority groups watched less television on average, a greater proportion of their viewing time was spent watching non-terrestrial channels compared to the general population. The report showed a higher take-up of cable and satellite television services among ethnic minority groups and concluded that this was due to demand for increased choice of programmes and channels, and access to specialist channels which provided programming around culture and news that was specifically targeted at them. Ultimately I made the decision not to actively pursue the recruitment of ethnic minority

participants for this research project. It seems perverse to deflect accusations of gendered essentialism by applying an essentialist approach to racial categories. In doing so I would have been asking a handful of women to speak for a huge multiplicity of ethnic experience, arguably making their inclusion meaningless and losing the significance of what they might say in the context of the sample as a whole. Could I really expect a forty year old South Asian woman to reflect the experience of a seventy year old from the West Indies? How far would a second generation woman's memories reflect those of a first generation immigrant? Instead it is my aspiration to conduct a similarly scaled study, again with a focus on generation, within a specific ethnic community to act as a complementary piece of research to this one. Richard Dyer draws attention to the problematic binarism of "white" and "black" (Dyer, 1993), invoking Paul Gilroy (Gilroy, 1987) to demonstrate how whiteness both disappears behind and is subsumed into other identities. He adds that the invisibility of whiteness colonises the definition of other norms - class, gender, heterosexuality, nationality and so on - it also masks whiteness as itself a category. As it stands, therefore, this sample should be read as one which *is* racialised, but as "white".

Whilst there has been much theorising on race and the media, there is a marked paucity of audience research in a British context which addresses these concerns (Gillespie, 1995). The young people Gillespie researched demonstrated through their 'TV Talk' their relationships with older generations and the differing opinions which existed therein. Race was one of a *number* of social factors Gillespie considered, rather than an approach which focussed on only one social category. The shifts in attitude expressed by Gillespie's participants highlight the importance of a generational category to the understanding of the television audience. It is through these generational shifts that we can begin to understand *how* change is enacted over time.

### Women's Biographies

#### *The Habituated Generation (Women in their Forties and Fifties)*

Dawn. Higher education administrator. Aged 42. Dawn lives with her partner and two teenage daughters in Leicester. She contacted me because she felt that television had been central to her childhood and because she was keen to see a qualitative interview in action.

Mae. Administrator. Aged 43. Mae is divorced and lives alone in Glasgow. She has two older children. She got in touch because she loves television and thought she would like to be involved in my research.

Mandy. Radiographer. Aged 48. Mandy lives alone in Edinburgh and has a son in his twenties and one grandchild. She is my cousin, who was excited to see my advert in *Yours* magazine and got in touch to help me out.

Tracey. Airport security worker. Aged 50. Tracey lives with her partner and two teenage children in Sussex. Tracey was the youngest of five children and remembers television as a companion during her childhood. Tracey contacted me because she thought my research sounded interesting and she wondered whether it might be attached to a television programme.

Sylvia. Further education teacher. Aged 52. Sylvia lives in Leicester with her husband, where they moved in the 1980s from the East End of London. Her son has just started university. She contacted me after attending the project's Career Women event at the Phoenix, Leicester.

Jenny. Social worker. Aged 53. Jenny lives in Bristol with her second husband. She is very close to her daughter, who is in her final year at university. Jenny contacted me because she thought my research sounded interesting and because she would like to think that someone would help her daughter if she was in a similar situation.

#### *The Enchanted Generation (Women in their Sixties and Seventies)*

Sue E. Freelance media regulator. Aged 60. Sue lives with her husband in London. They do not have children. Sue has worked as a secondary school teacher and as a regulator for ITV and kept journals throughout her life which often referenced television that she had watched. She contacted me because she felt that her work in the industry might give me a different perspective.

Marilyn. Homemaker. Aged 64. Marilyn lives in Powys with her husband in the street where she grew up. She has three adult children who she sees regularly. Marilyn now spends much of her time looking after her elderly mother. Marilyn contacted me

because she liked the thought of talking about television from 'the old days' which she thinks was much better than what is on offer now.

Fiona. Retired secretary. Aged 64. Fiona lives with her husband on the Isle of Mull, but grew up in Aberdeen. Her two grown up daughters live in Glasgow and she visits them as frequently as possible. Fiona contacted me because she wanted to help.

Sue O. Retired office manager. Aged 64. Sue lives alone in Welwyn Garden City. She was one of only two respondents who had no children. Sue O contacted me because she liked the idea of reminiscing about her past viewing.

Jane. Retired teacher. Aged 64. Jane is divorced and lives alone in Chester. She has a close relationship with her adult son. Jane contacted me because she thought it would be unfortunate if nobody offered to help a student with their research.

Lynda. Homemaker. Aged 64. Lynda lives with her husband and adult son in the suburbs of Liverpool. She contacted me because she thought my research sounded interesting and she liked the idea of a trip down memory lane.

Carol. Retired secretary. Aged 64. Carol lives with her partner in Norwich. They have two adult children. Carol got in touch because she still recalls her childhood viewing with great affection and wanted to talk about it.

Patricia. PhD Student. Aged 65. Patricia lives with her second husband in Norwich. She has three children, with a big gap between the older two and the youngest. She responded to the advert that she saw in *Saga* magazine because the research sounded similar to her own and she was keen to help.

Maureen. Retired from a varied career. Aged 65. Maureen lives alone in Cardiff. She has two adult daughters. Maureen has had a difficult life, which has encompassed divorce and the prospect of homelessness which made her an introspective and thoughtful interviewee. She responded to the piece in *Yours* magazine because she would like to think that someone would help out her daughters if they were in the same position.

Hilary G. Retired nurse. Aged 67. Hilary lives with her husband in Weston-Super-Mare. They have five adult children. Hilary got in touch because she liked the idea of a trip down memory lane and because she wanted to help.



Gill. Retired administrator. Aged 70. Gill lives with her husband in Leicester. She has three adult children and several grandchildren who she sees regularly. Gill contacted me because she thought my research sounded interesting.

Belinda. Retired civil servant. Aged 72. Belinda lives alone in London since her second husband died two years ago. She has two adult sons who live nearby. Belinda contacted me because she enjoys taking the opportunity to voice her opinion.

Hilary H. Retired teacher. Aged 73. Hilary lives with her husband in Leicester. Their children around the country and she would like to see them more often. She got in touch because her eldest daughter attended De Montfort University and she thought she would like to help me.

Brenda A. Homemaker. Aged 76. Brenda is widowed and lives in North Yorkshire. She has one daughter who she sees regularly. She said she did not know what prompted her to write to me because she was sure she had nothing much to say on the subject.

Janet. Homemaker. Aged 77. Janet lives in Shropshire with her husband. They have three adult children who live nearby. Janet got in touch with me because she wanted to talk about the old days.

Jean. Housewife. Aged 79. Jean is widowed and lives with her daughter and family in Birmingham. She got in touch because she has never before seen an advert that asked about something she knows about.

#### *The Adopter Generation (Women in their Eighties and Nineties)*

Betty. Retired secretary. Aged 80. Betty has been widowed for thirty years and lives alone in Buckinghamshire, although she is originally from Leeds. Betty has one adult son. She got in touch with me through the WI, of which she is an active member. Betty took part in the research because she wanted to help and thought it sounded interesting

Enid. Self-employed cake baker. Aged 82. Enid is divorced and lives alone in Chester, but is originally from Sheffield. She has a son and daughter who both live in

the South East with their families but visit often. Enid spent some time in California and Jersey between 1947 and 1989. Enid contacted me because she likes to be asked for and to give her opinion.

Molly. Retired postal worker. Aged 83. Molly is recently widowed and lives in Essex with one of her adult daughters and grandson. Molly left school at fourteen to work after her father died and remembered that the family saved her wage to buy their first television. Molly contacted me because it was the first advert she had seen that she thought she would be able to help with and she wanted to talk about the old days.

Margaret. Homemaker. Aged 84. Margaret lives in Bristol with her daughter. She also has a son who she stays with when her daughter is on holiday. She got in touch with me because she wanted to help with my studies.

Peggy. Retired television producer. Aged 90. Peggy lives with her daughter in Wales. She worked in television production for both BBC Wales and S4C for a large part of her working life. She contacted me after seeing the article in The Guardian because she was so glad to see that the period was being given academic interest

Joan. Homemaker. Aged 91. Joan is widowed and lives in an old people's home in Buckinghamshire. She is a member of the WI and got in touch because she thought my research sounded interesting.

Hilda. Retired secretary. Aged 92. Hilda is widowed and lives alone with her eldest daughter in Manchester. She also has two sons. In her younger life she lived in London. Hilda got in touch because she worked in the industry for a period in the 1950s and wanted to remember that period of her life

Ella. Homemaker. Aged 95. Ella is widowed and lives alone in County Durham. She grew up in Portsmouth and lived there until she was in her fifties. She has three children. Ella contacted me because she wanted to tell her father's story.

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# CHAPTER FOUR

## GENERATION

### *Introduction*

I have spent time in the preceding chapters locating my research in terms of the existing literature around the subject, and my own research approach. I illustrated the lack of empirical work on the historical television audience which has more often been inferred, and also noted that although television's role in the everyday has been well attended to, this attention has again been marked by a distinct lack of empirical work. In this chapter on the generational aspect of my research agenda, I begin to discuss the findings of my interviews.

As a category, generation remains under-theorised and under-utilised compared with other analytical social categories such as gender, ethnicity, social class and sexuality. The theory of generations, or sociology of generations, is posed by Karl Mannheim in his 1923 essay *The Problem of Generations*, in which he postulates that people are significantly influenced by the socio-historical environment that informs their youth, thus forming social generation. He calls this the "stratification of experience" (Mannheim, 1970). The question of what to do with generation as a category for analysis has since been revisited across disciplines. Despite interest shown in the category within other disciplines, however, it is rarely applied to the history of television audiences or, indeed, to the industry itself.

The inclusion of generation as a social category for analysis was a central aspect of my research design. In this chapter, I explore the ways that generational membership and women's understanding of that generational position has influenced their relationships with viewing of and talking about television.

### *On Generation*

While generation is popularly used to connote the parent-child relationship it is used in two different ways in sociological discourses. It can serve either as a cohort of individuals born at a given time or as a study of the generational cultures of those cohorts. These approaches have largely been kept distinct in quantitative (for the former) and qualitative (the latter) work. Here, I use a more conflated approach to the term, informed by the notion of generation found across Pierre Bourdieu's body of work

and usefully invoked by June Edmonds and Bryan Turner in their study of generational theory from a sociological perspective (2002). In his 1993 essays on youth in *Sociology in Question*, Bourdieu suggests that generational struggles are significant in relation to intellectual change and conflict between generations for ownership of cultural capital. He notes that generations are not biologically reproduced, but are instead socially created, “youth and age are not self-evident data, but are socially constructed in the struggle between youth and the old” (Bourdieu, 1993:95), while at the same time accepting that antagonisms between generations are “clashes between systems of aspirations formed in different periods” (*ibid*: 99). In so doing, Bourdieu conflates “generation” as both a social construct and a cohort in a way that usefully suggests how cultural ideas might be transmitted and altered across and through generations.

Karen Foster’s presentation of generation-as-discourse is also useful in research such as this which is based around the life course. This is particularly the case when attempting to understand and convey perceived differences between older and younger contemporaries and the social, cultural and technological changes affecting their lives (Foster, 2013). In her interviews with 52 Canadian participants aged between 25 and 86 about their working lives, Foster explores generation as a discourse in people’s narratives rather than as a ‘category’. She found that generation was invoked in working life stories in two ways. Firstly, as an axis of difference and secondly as a socio-historical dynamic when it becomes drawn into larger narratives about social change and progress, when it becomes ‘a one-word lens through which both choice and determinism are rendered visible in the lives of others’ (*Ibid*:212).

Edmonds and Turner’s instructive work on generation focusses upon traumatic events and how these develop generational consciousness. In terms of television viewing or, indeed, other forms of viewing culture such as cinema, the question of generational mediation of the viewing experience has been largely neglected. Those accounts where generation has been considered indicate fluctuations and alterations in attitudes and relationships with media across generations, particularly in terms of how the chronological period in which women’s social and cultural education occurs can alter their reading of a text (Press, 1991; Moseley, 2002).

Despite the suggestive connection between the development of television as domestic technology and changes in gender relations, little academic attention has been paid to this relationship over time. One of the fundamental research aims at the heart of the design of the A History of Television for Women in Britain, 1947-1989 project was to

relate the development of television and its viewers in Britain to social change, particularly in the growth of consumer culture, increase in the female workforce, the re-organisation of family life, and the rise of the women's and civil rights movements during the period of research. The value of generation as a social category in such research lies in its capacity to reveal the ways that social change, human agency and shared cultures might evolve over an extended period of time (Abrams, 1970; Edmunds and Turner, 2002; Marias, 1970). In analysing the interviews through a generational framework I have been able to map the significance of women's generational location to their responses in my interviews, not only in terms of how and why they had formed those feelings and beliefs, but also how they expressed these responses in an interview situation. Generation does not merely fulfil a role in my research, but in fact underpins the research, emerging as a major factor in how women formulated their socially constructed responses to the interviews, on a similar footing with gender and class. What is outlined here informs the following thesis, and the chapters which follow highlight the manner in which feminine subjectivities have been shaped by generational character.

#### *Generation and the Reception of Popular Culture*

With a focus on Audrey Hepburn, Rachel Moseley's work addresses the relationships between stars and audiences, and the articulation of those relationships in personal narratives and everyday practices. Andrea Press focusses on the image-shaping force of television in American culture, examining the relationship between the representations of their gender offered to women by television and their own self-images. Press is concerned with the gradual movement from second wave feminism to a new period which she sees as marked by new confusion and a lack of assurance about the relationship between family, society and women's role in each. She asks how women's self-conceptions correspond to television images, whether they identify with the female characters they see on television and whether women use these images informing their own self-images. Both projects draw attention to the relevance of generation as a category, but the conclusions drawn by both are significantly under-theorised. Generation is included in the design of these studies, but when it comes to analysing interaction with popular culture, both revert instead to talking around class and gender.

Press and Moseley both mobilise ideas of 'generation' based upon pre- and post-feminist generations. These have been extremely useful in terms of demonstrating

feminism's influence upon subjectivity, and indicating the manner in which an entire cohort of people may be influenced, to differing degrees, by a political or social movement. Such generational groupings, however, are less effective at showing the nuance of the slow creep of this process across generational cohorts as they overlap. My own framing of generation instead sees the generational groups run into each other, although they broadly fall into groupings of women in their forties and fifties, women in their sixties and seventies, and women in their eighties and nineties. Women younger than forty are not represented at all, and as such there is less focus on the contradictions between what "old women" and "young women" think. While there is a significant range of ages (42-95) all of the women I spoke to fully inhabit the world of adulthood very comfortably. For the women interviewed in this study there is not conversation around the family they would like to have 'someday' (Press, 1991:169). Those decisions have been made in the past for all of the women interviewed here and the lives they have lived and narrated to me are a consequence of those choices. The framing of my work through a particular periodisation of television, and the running together of generations that this creates unpicks the slow and gradual process of change rather than the start and end points that Press and Moseley's work necessarily provides.

Both works point to the influence of feminism in women's reception of film or television characters and storylines that they encountered in their own audience research. Both draw attention to how women's membership of pre- and post-feminist movement generations might influence the meanings they make in their television viewing. For example, for the pre-feminist women, those who Press identifies as in their sixties and over, who spoke to Press the female characters in *Charlie's Angels* represented strong female characters who had jobs and freedom. For the post-feminist generation women, those aged twenty nine and under, those same characters were viewed derisively because they received their instruction from a man (Charlie) and wore sexually provocative clothing in their crime fighting. In Rachel Moseley's work, attitudes to what Audrey Hepburn meant to the women varied. The women in the earlier group, the 'pre-feminist' generation who grew up in the 1950s and 1960s, tended to view Hepburn as a princess figure, an appropriately demure role model to emulate in a conservative time, while the women in the latter group, the post-feminist generation who grew up in the 1990s, saw her as "the woman who managed to have it all", again dependent upon their generational position as either pre- or post-feminist.

This work begins to offer a tantalising glimpse of what a generational approach could bring to an analysis of the intersection of feminism and cultural history. However, my own research, characterised by a particular period of British television, has seen a picture build in relation to their exposure to television, and indicates that other factors have emerged as equally important to women's media literacy. When looking at the responses of the various generations of women I can also see three distinct phases of *television* generation rather than the two defined solely by exposure to feminism. Throughout this chapter, and throughout the remainder of the thesis, I hope to indicate the ways that the various themes of the interviews cut across these phases of exposure to television.

### *Contextualising History*

The period between 1947 and 1989 was one of significant social and political change. Before embarking upon an investigation of how generational membership has inflected memories of women's relationships with television, I will sketch that contextualising history, focussing not on broader political histories, but on those social and cultural shifts which altered and influenced women's lives.

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, women's role in society was subject to considerable attention. Questions around how women should be educated and what women's role in the workplace should be became sites of contention. In 1948, John Newsom published his report *The Education of Girls*, which proposed 'vocational' education for the average girl. In this context, 'vocational' meant domestic. He further advised the education of women as purchasers, particularly in terms of interior design and domestic beautification. Sex education, which was introduced in the British schools curriculum in 1956, was referred to as 'preparation for parenthood' and was particularly designed for female pupils (Wilson, 1980) further highlighting women's significance as home makers and mothers.

Many of the gains which had been made in the workplace over the Second World War, when women found themselves doing a variety of jobs which often included 'men's work', were eroded to some extent in the immediate aftermath of the war. Again, anxiety over the role of women and what this might mean for the family and for the male population is clear. The housewife, who had been lauded during the Second World War as the figure who kept the nation fed on the meagre rations available to them, transferred itself into a somewhat idealised view of the 1950s housewife. In her

introductory chapter, Stephanie Spencer illustrates how female career choices were constricted by the entrenched opinion that woman's place was in the home, an expectation confirmed by a younger age of marriage and motherhood. The majority of female school leavers were 15 and entered employment only to leave once married (Spencer, 2006).

However, beyond the immediate postwar period, a more progressive attitude to women's education could also be seen. Across the 1950s and into the 1960s, the number of schools in Britain increased and the idea of the egalitarian comprehensive school rather secondary modern. Educational reform led to the effective elimination of the grammar school. The Crowther Report (1959) which dealt with education of girls approaching the end of their school careers suggested that an elite of educated women might fill the gap caused by 'the brain drain'. Arguments around female education tended to hinge upon the importance of what the 'able' woman could bring to society versus concerns that greater female involvement in the public sphere might lead to the decay of family life and how education might stimulate each outcome. By the end of the 1970s, the number of female university students had risen sharply. Carol Dyhouse views this as the result of a combination of factors, including the broadening of the university curriculum into arts and humanities, the increased marketing of universities to the female population and an end to the trend for early marriage which had reached its peak in the late 1960s. She points to the availability of both the contraceptive pill and easier access to legalised abortion (Abortion Law Reform Act, 1967) as factors in an older marriage age for women.

Whatever the concerns over women's participation in the workplace were, the number of married women in the workplace increased significantly over my period of study. Elizabeth Wilson mobilises figures used by Westergaard and Resler, which indicate that in the United Kingdom 9% of married women were in paid employment in 1921 and 10% in 1931. This rose significantly to 21% in 1951, 32% in 1961 and 47% in 1972 (Westergaard and Resler, 1975:98, quoted in Wilson, 1980:41). The 1960s and 1970s saw a resurgence of the women's liberation movement, whose campaigning saw legal gains such as the Equal Pay Act of 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975.

Outside shifts around work and education, this period also saw the emergence of the cultural entity known as 'the teenager'. The appearance of coffee bars and related youth cultures such as Teddy Boys (Partington, 2009) saw the beginning of significant global shifts in attitudes and values which were led by youth cultures throughout the



1960s and beyond (Hebdige, 1979). Female participation in these cultures made the female adolescent more publically visible.

Spaces and institutions which had previously served a community focus began to lose their cultural significance. The 'affluent society' of the 1950s saw an increased culture of consumerism and a retreat from public spaces to the domestic space. One such example of the period's increased materialism was the growth and focus of the women's magazine industry. Elizabeth Wilson points to the wartime title *Housewife* which had taken a progressive stance on a variety of issues and how such magazines fulfilled a social role, enabling the housewife to make the most of her rations and embracing the 'make do and mend' ethos of the war. Wilson notes that women's magazines following the war changed significantly. Advances in technology and an increased use of colour were tempting to advertisers, and that editors switched their interest to pictorial material to the detriment of 'think pieces' (Wilson, 1980:37). As new, purpose built, shopping centres became the norm in towns and cities across the country in the 1960s, leading to the decline of the high street where housewives had done their shopping before, during and immediate postwar. The materialistic aspect of consumer culture became particularly prevalent in western culture in the 1980s, with films such as *Wall Street* (1987) portraying a new mantra, that 'greed is good'. Similarly, the role of the church became of less significance to the white, British population. Religious observance declined notably in Britain during the second half of the 20th century, despite the growth of non-Christian religions due to immigration and travel (Crockett and Voas, 2006).

By 1989, the end of my period of interest, Britain was a very different place, socially and politically, to the country it had been in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Women's role in the new order was one which was contested and wrestled with over the period. While the freedoms and opportunities offered to women can be seen to have increased, my interview data indicates that certain underlying attitudes and expectations have remained intact.

### *Discourses of Feminism*

The ideas of feminism were more strongly represented in the narrated identities of the youngest women who spoke to me, those in the forties and fifties. It manifested itself in their conversation around role models, talk of household organisation and instant understanding of the way that my research might have a particularly feminist agenda

and how they wanted to speak to this. Feminism formed a greater part of their consideration and discussion of how television and life came together. Here, for example, Dawn (42) responded to my question about whether she could remember any role models from television with an instant demonstration of her feminist identity, indicating that her role models were women who were playing by their own rules;

Dawn: To get a woman as a presenter who was firstly not really posh, and could also pull off being sexy as well, and come over as being smart. I suppose really, yeah, she [Paula Yates] was like a role model. In fact I'd struggle to think of anyone – except actually the woman on *Tomorrow's World* (BBC1, 1965-2003)<sup>3</sup>

Hazel: Maggie Philbin? Or the other one?

Dawn: No before Maggie Philbin. She had long dark hair. Wouldn't have been Judith Chalmers or someone like that?

Hazel: It's Judith something.

Dawn: I remember I wasn't quite as taken with Maggie Philbin cos she was quite young and more poppy...and strangely enough I connected more with the previous woman. Because I just thought 'how amazing, it's about science and there's a woman doing it. And people are listening to her and, um, she seems to even understand what she's talking about'.

Hazel: Yeah.

Dawn: She wasn't like a fluffy – I think even as a kid you understand when people are there just for their looks. And I think there was a sort of shared understanding that she was there because she really knew her stuff.

Hazel: She really knew it. I suppose...I mean I had forgotten about *Tomorrow's World* until you mentioned it, but actually it was probably actually a really important programme. Cos it always had quite a strong female presence, didn't it?

Dawn: Yeah, I mean that would've been a massive deal to have...I mean that's even going way back. That's quite in the seventies isn't it? For a woman to be presenting a science programme, who wasn't a dolly bird...is actually, I imagine that was quite a bold move for them actually.

Dawn's instinctive first response to my question was to select a woman who does not conform to typical expectations of a teenage girls' role model, operating in the field of science and technology. Her eschewal of the 'pop-y' Maggie Philbin demonstrates a conscious understanding of the implicitly feminist agenda underlying a project such as mine, which I did not explicitly lay out during the interview process at any point. Not only has she understood this, but her choice of the overtly feminine Paula Yates

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<sup>3</sup> *Tomorrow's World* was a long-running BBC television series on new developments in science and technology.

counterbalanced by the serious and intellectual Judith Hann is a conscious positioning of her own feminine identity. Dawn's response was quite different to those made by older women in both those generational phases where television could be seen to have made an intervention. That is, women in the sixties and seventies and those in their eighties and nineties. Women in the middle generational grouping took a longer time to get to grips with the question, often indicating that they wanted to give me female names but could not recall any women on television during the period 1947-1989 who appealed to them as role models. They were more likely to name men who had particularly impressed them and who they wanted to emulate:

Hazel: Are there any television personalities of the time that you particularly remember, or any fictional characters that you particularly wanted to be like, dress like? Or you just thought were wonderful for whatever reason?

Sue E: Well I think I probably wanted to be Cathy McGowan. But, like a lot of girls then, um...but as I said before I can't recall any female role models that I thought 'wow, I want to be like her'. Plenty of male role models, and why I thought I could be like them I don't know.

Hazel: But that's fine. Which sort of male role models?

Sue E: Well, the ones I've talked about. They're not role models, but they're just sort of inspiring characters, you know, Simon Templar and Robin Hood and Regan, And I suppose being drawn to strong, pro-active characters. When you're living in, well, in a real life where actually things just jog along mostly, to see something that's exceptional and people creating really a lot of action and mayhem you – 'wow', you know?

Sue's response indicates her generational positioning. When she was growing up and looking for role models, there were fewer women on television in fewer roles which offered female characters with agency or inspiration. She is drawn to exciting male figures largely, it seems, because that it was what she was offered. The oldest women struggled firstly with the very notion of a "role model", with a common response by women in this age group being "why would I take my role models from the television"? The idea of a role model was foreign, as expressed here by Molly (83);

'I can't remember any. Not off hand. I don't think we really thought about that sort of thing then. I think we think about it more now. I do now think about it but...not sort of...not then. We had a more closed existence.'

In Molly's world view, and the views of her generational contemporaries, television was characterised as an insufficiently worthwhile place to look for role models. Women of this generation were more likely to suggest that their role models had been taken from 'real life' and the examples that they offered constituted mothers, aunts and work

colleagues who had influenced their lives when they had been growing up or who had, in some way, set an example that they wished to follow. The generational groupings here are clear, indicating that it is exposure to the medium that has, in part, produced this particular type of expectation.

The youngest women's feminist identities were much more apparent in all aspects of their interviews. Jenny's (51) comments on *The Killing* (BBC4, 2011-1012), while not a programme which fell within my period of interest, also indicate a well-developed feminist sensibility;

Jenny: No...and I'm quite intrigued that so much attention has been given to the detective's pullover.

Hazel: [Laughs] Yeah.

Jenny: You know. That kind of she's some kind of...I'd watch it for that alone really. That she's wearing some sort of, you know, a patterned jumper most of the time.

Hazel: A Christmas jumper?

Jenny: Yeah, a Christmas jumper. Exactly [laughs] that's very good. And there's just so much attention to this. Whereas you look at something like *Morse* or *Lewis* and nobody would ever kind of comment on Kevin Whately or John Thaw's outfit, really.

Jenny draws attention to the fact that Sara Lund's feminine identity and character is formulated by the clothes she wears and that the resulting attention given to her clothing is a further indication of her gender. However, she also notes that the same is not true of male characters in other programmes from the genre. At another point in the interview she discusses her anger at the BBC's decision to drop Arlene Phillips from *Strictly Come Dancing* (BBC1, 2004-present) to be replaced by the much younger Alesha Dixon. Her anger, however, was not only directed at the BBC but also at what she viewed as Dixon's "lack of solidarity". She uses this point as an opportunity to critique second wave feminism itself;

Jenny: I mean I grew up when you could say that feminism was in its heyday. And there was a lot that I would challenge about the way that feminism went about its job. I think we lost an opportunity in the 1970s to actually really take women's roles as mothers seriously and say actually what we should be fighting for is choice here. If women want to stay at home with their children they should be earning a wage. But instead of which we went down this road where women have got to be as good as men in the workplace. And actually a lot of feminists – I mean, I remember I was at home with my daughter for a year without working. And women used to say to me 'yeah, but what do you do?' And I was quite shocked

actually, because that was the sort of question that men used to ask women.

Hazel: I suppose everybody was denigrating a woman's role as a mother.

Jenny: Yes. I think television can exacerbate that sort of view. You get women on television who are the superwomen, don't you? You find out they're doing breakfast presenting at six in the morning and they've got five children at home. All under ten, you know. It gives quite a distorted view of life, doesn't it? Because they're obviously on some very good salary that all the rest of us can only dream of really and so with that money they can give people a wage to keep things going at home, can't they? And it's quite a distorted view really. In that sense people have to be very careful of the images they're presenting on television. The women do. I...I do get very concerned by how glamorous everyone appears to be.

It is this complexity of thinking and the way she introduces the discussion because she has recognised that this is of interest to me which indicates how fully Jenny, like Dawn, understands feminism and has made choices about which feminist ideas she wants to assimilate.

However, feminist discourses did not only filter forward from the 1960s through to the women who were born during its heyday. It is not accurate to claim that older women were untouched by feminist ideas, and many of them were also keen to portray their absorption of the central ideas of feminism. Feminist ideas have filtered through society to such a degree that the older women, including those whose formative years predated the main thrust of second wave feminism, were still able to recognise the feminist agenda of my research and took action to portray themselves to me as feminists, or rather, as versions of their own understanding of what a feminist is. Molly (83), for example, was keen to portray her control of television viewing to me, claiming at various points throughout the interview that when she and her husband disagreed upon what would be watched that she always decided and he always acquiesced to her wishes. As the interview began to draw to a close, however, it emerged that the balance of viewing power had actually not been stacked so strongly in Molly's favour and that her husband would not allow costume drama on their television: 'Oh yes, and I missed them...and when he died the first thing I did was go back to watching them'. Her feminist self-construction began to unravel, and eventually a very different, and much more conventional, picture of domestic labour and power division began to emerge:

Molly: I think quite...my friend and I, we're both in our eighties. She's 87 now, I'm 83 and we think we were born too soon. Our husbands...um...did not act like husbands of today act. You know...it's always a complete surprise to me when I see men cooking. It's an absolute shock. We never

had anything like that – looking after the children or bathing them or anything like that. That was your job.

Hazel: Do you think you might have liked your husband to do a bit of cooking or

Molly: Yes, I would. Anyone to cook for me. I'm fed up of doing it all these years.

Molly clearly felt some need to narrate herself during the interview as having an understanding of feminism and of having enacted this consciousness in her relationship with her husband. For Molly, one aspect of being a feminist is that she is able to watch her own choice of programme on television, that this is a power struggle a feminist might be able to win. So that is the picture of herself that she tried to portray to me. At no point, however, did she use the terms 'feminist' or 'feminism'. In his own discussion of memory, Julian Maras notes that 'when an old person speaks of "my time", meaning some past period he seems to reveal that he lives in the present as an exile or an alien' (1970:11). This relationship with the past was apparent in much of Molly's interview, where she frequently slipped out of talking about television and the period in question, to talk about an earlier time frame in which she felt she had some outside agency. She talked instead about attending dance halls, with a clear sense that that was 'her time'. Her expression of shock at the male role in the present day is further indicative of her struggle to make sense of the current era and also her sense of dislocation from it.

In the lives of these women where feminism had not played such an active role, either due to age or circumstance, there was a distinct 'managing' behaviour at play. These women exercised a very particular control of household space. In each of my interviews with Brenda, Hilary G, Molly, Enid, Ella, June, Betty there was a point at which the woman, while sitting in her television watching chair, would produce her weekly copy of the television listings from the side of her chair, where it nestled next to the remote control, and demonstrate how she had marked up her weekly viewing. All but Hilary G were now living alone either through divorce or, more commonly, widowhood, but all recounted this as an activity that they had done every week for years. This is suggestive of one of the ways, in a world where they feel little agency is offered to them, the women have developed a means of controlling household space and at least asserting a desire over what to watch, even if those desires did not amount to much in the way of actual viewing. Its domestic positioning creates an atmosphere in which not only is the content of television output a space for feminist struggles, but so

too is the environment in which it is viewed. This is the same type of gender struggle for control and power which can be seen in other audience work, evoking the remote control as a highly visible symbol of condensed power relations (Morley, 1986) or male dominance of the Video Cassette Recorder (Gray, 1992). The *TV Times* almost becomes a symbol of control for the older women which the younger women do not need because they are able to mobilise the language of feminism as an outlet for these feelings.

Perhaps one of the ways that older women reflected the message of feminism was in their resentment of what they perceived as the greater freedoms that the feminist movement had provided for younger women. Molly's comment, discussed earlier, about being born too soon is a typical expression of this envy. While Molly's anger was directed at her late husband, on a handful of occasions in other interviews this resentment was presented in terms of intergenerational conflict (Bourdieu, 1993; Edmonds and Turner, 2002), quite bitterly expressed as a conflict between a jealousy of freedom but also criticism of the effect this had on women's ability to fulfil their gendered role. Modern, or younger, women's attitudes to motherhood were a source of concern and judgement, as expressed by Maureen (65):

Maureen: Nowadays people don't give a toss about their kids really...you know, they sort of...do it because it's expected of them, as it was of me.

Hazel: That you'd have children?

Maureen: What?

Hazel: It was just expected that you'd have children?

Maureen: Yes. To please the grandparents basically. Once you've had them, it seems to me that people just go out and get drunk and just carry on as if they'd never had them in the first place. They have no commitment. So I don't think *Cathy Come Home* (BBC, 1966) if it was made nowadays would have the same impact at all. You know, cos the mother would probably say 'there you go, take them. Cos I've had enough anyway'. That's the truth. That's how I see it.

Maureen's opinion is unsubstantiated, and expressed to me, a younger woman and mother, in a confrontational tone. She indicates that her own foray into motherhood is similar to younger women's because it was expected of her. Her argument, however, is that despite becoming a mother to please others, she dutifully fulfilled her gendered role in her own, generationally sanctioned, 'correct' way as opposed to her generational attitude to the 'incorrect' way that younger women do so. In this antagonistic stance we can see an example of Bourdieu's 'clashes between systems of aspirations in different

periods' cited earlier in this chapter clearly played out in the empirical data. Motherhood, as I will expand upon in Chapter Six, was a prime site for such generational negotiation, with but also functioned as a focus of judgement and value. (Skeggs and Wood, 2008; Tyler, 2011).

### *The Commonality of the Female Experience*

More than difference, however, what is particularly striking about my interview data is the extent of the commonalities and the consistencies expressed across generations, regardless of their exposure to the women's movement or popular feminism. Douglas Kellner suggests that modernity signifies the destruction of past forms of life, values and identities combined with the production of ever new ones; that 'modernity involves a process of innovation, of constant turnover and novelty' (Kellner, 1992:142). Modernity leads us to constantly seek out the new, the differences, the ruptures in continuity. The desire to jettison the 'traditional' and to value what is new and different makes it easy to forget that often 'change' is more likely to be a shift of focus than a complete rupture with the past. Work, for example, on the interactivity offered through new media has tended to emphasise it as active and connective against the passive and disconnected character of 'old media', seemingly ignoring the raft of audience research which has shown that television audiences might be actively making meaning (Morley, 1980; Ang, 1985; Liebes and Katz, 1990) or the ways that old media is embedded in daily social interaction, social integration and collective forms of belonging (Morley, 1986; Seiter, 1999; Skeggs and Wood, 2008). This is particularly apparent in the ignored realm of the domestic, which often seems to be considered outside of modernity.

Yet within my interviews the same contexts of viewing and of domestic organisation and power struggles are described across generations, including lack of control over viewing matter, modes of viewing, genres identified as enjoyable, motherhood, domestic and workplace juggling. Women's domestic responsibility forms the backbone of the majority of women's recollections regardless of age, with memories of childcare, care of parents and domestic chores all underpinning their curation of narratives. What emerges is a somewhat depressing picture suggestive of a common experience of being a woman across time, largely unchanged by the perceived gains made by feminism and a more progressive social world, indicative of "home's" role in



reproducing gender norms. Work on domestic labour and gender roles indicates that change has in fact been small and has progressed slowly (Gershuny and Robinson, 1988; Sullivan, 2000). Oriel Sullivan uses time diary studies in the UK to trace gendered differences in the completion of housework. She found that in 1975, women undertook 77% of all housework, dropping to 67% in 1987 and 63% in 1997. For households where heterosexual partners were both employed full time, women carried out 68% of all housework in 1975, dropping to 62% in 1987 and 60% in 1997.

Andrea Press has attended to the idea of “family television” by which she means families as depicted on television. Her two generational groupings responded in very different ways to these family depictions. Press interprets this as being because the older women’s experience with family precedes in time and importance their viewing of television’s images of the family and for the younger women who have less experience in the family...and have come to understand the family in conjunction with viewing the idealised forms on television which their mothers allowed and sometimes encouraged them to see (Press, 1991). How family was represented on television did not play any part in my interviews, but the lived institution of ‘family’ did, emerging as equally important to the women I spoke to across my three generational groupings. This is further evidence of the efficacy of the less polarised generational groupings of pre- and post-feminism mobilised by Press and Moseley that I addressed earlier in the chapter.

### *Memory and The Life Course*

It became clear that the women’s memories of television they had watched and their viewing practices within the domestic context were bound together tightly, regardless of generation. Tim O’Sullivan’s notes of his own oral history research that ‘other memories frequently fuse television programmes and experiences to the rites of passage domestic biography, serving as markers for remembered people and situations, of changing relations of kinship, lifestyle and shared experience’ (1991:163). This type of memory work is also apparent in my own interview data.

Traditionally viewed as both a domestic and feminised medium, my interviews demonstrate that television has become such an integral part of ‘the everyday’ that it is precisely through other everyday activities such as relationships with family and friends and domestic routine that the programmes recalled, and the reasons for their significance in the women’s lives, emerge. Here, Marilyn (64) begins to talk about

*Sunday Night at the London Palladium* (ATV, 1955-1967)<sup>4</sup>, a programme that many of the women in their sixties and older talked about;

Marilyn: There was one time my sister was due to give birth to my second niece and we were all sat there one Sunday, 'cos she'd come down, we were all sat there watching TV and she started going into labour. *Sunday Night at the London Palladium* was on, I'll always remember it [HC laughs] and her husband came down and had to take her to hospital. And I'll always remember my mother saying 'don't you dare have that baby, I've got to hear Shirley Bassey tonight. So don't you dare have that baby before'? But I've never forgotten that. We always watched that.

This animated memory led into quite a detailed account of her family's viewing of the programme, including having to watch it in her pyjamas because it over-ran her bed time and she had to run to bed the moment it was finished and how her dad used to make toffee on a Sunday so that each member of the family could have two squares in a handkerchief to eat as they watched.

Domestic routine and television's role not only in terms of fitting into that routine, but actually framing and creating it was also a common theme of conversation by most of the women. These were particularly recounted around experiences of motherhood which became a central feature of discussion around television, relationships and intimacy. While much of the associated conversation involved using television as a distraction for children while important household tasks were completed, other memories indicate a more intimate relationship between child, mother and television set such as Jenny's narrative of watching *Sesame Street* with her daughter while they ate lunch before going for a walk or Lynda's (64) recollections of watching *Absolutely Fabulous* when it was broadcast with her teenage son.

There is a quality about these reminiscences that indicate the ways in which television can be perceived as a medium of intimacy. Its situation within the domestic makes it pivotal to these moments of familial intimacy, echoing Susan Geiger's suggestion that women's embeddedness in familial life may shape their view of the world and consciousness of historical time (1986:348) and Emily Keightley's conclusion that, 'Television content is used to mark common cultural knowledge and is actively deployed to articulate and re-establish commonality. In this process, women's agency

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<sup>4</sup> *Sunday Night at the London Palladium* was a British television variety show produced by ATV for the ITV network, originally running from 1955 to 1967, with a brief revival in 1973 and 1974. The London Palladium is a theatre in London's West End. Regular hosts of the Palladium show were Tommy Trinder (1955–1958), Bruce Forsyth (1958–1960 and 1961–64), Don Arrol (1960–61), Norman Vaughan (1962–1965, 1974), Jimmy Tarbuck (1965–67) and Jim Dale (1973–74).

signals the gendered nature of their emotional labour in their everyday remembering and the key role that televisual texts can play in its performance' (Keightley, 2011:407). My interview data are notable for their concentration on memories of childhood and motherhood, the life course stages that most women were most able to narrate, whereas memories of teenage television viewing, aside from popular music programmes, were more difficult for the women to articulate. The idea of television 'dropping away' during adolescence was a common theme in the interviews of women in their forties, fifties, sixties and seventies. Older women did not address this issue, largely because television had entered their lives after their teenage years. Those women between their forties and seventies, however, talked about the way that social lives, domestic chores and homework began to encroach upon their television viewing during the teenage years. Such narratives indicate that there are life stages or periods when we are more tied to and involved with the domestic, regardless of generational cohort and that these are life stages when the domestic is more imbued with an emotional significance that affects recollections of television as a domestic medium.

My interview data indicate that women's personal investments, the means by which they judge themselves and ask others to judge them, are related to their location within family. David Morley's proposition that 'television may be a privatized activity - by comparison to going to the movies, for example - but it is still largely conducted within, rather than outside, social relations', formulated at a time concurrent with the period I have asked women to recall, indicates why this might be. The generational similarity of the women's narratives across life course suggests that the women's gendered recollections of the past remains relatively constant despite the dramatic social and domestic changes which occurred between 1947 and 1989. Television is widely understood to be a shared medium and a domestic medium and it is within this context that it continues to 'live' in memory, particularly for women who have a very particular relationship with the everyday and the emotional and physical labour invested in producing that domestic context.

### *Media Literacy and Registers of Speech*

Although the female experience has had a shared character across the generational memories gathered here, what has changed are the tools employed by women to express that experience and their dissatisfaction with it.

Sonia Livingstone describes media literacy as “the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and create messages across a variety of contexts” (2004:1), and there is a marked difference in the levels of media literacy displayed by the different generations of women that I spoke to. The younger women, those in their forties and fifties for whom television was no type of intervention, were able to talk about television in much more sophisticated terms than older women. This ability and reflexivity was not related to the level of education reached, which prompts the question of why this might be. I have identified two factors which have created this relationship for my sample. Firstly, the younger women I spoke to express a clear feeling that television is worth talking about in this way and they attach a greater importance to television, which in their narratives becomes more than the “box in the corner” as the older women are inclined to portray it. Secondly, in a neoliberal climate a greater importance is attached to reflexivity in all areas of life.

### *The Box in the Corner*

The first question of the interview, in which I asked what had made the women respond to my call to interview, was quite telling here in this respect. Molly, for example, said that she responded because although she always reads those types of adverts she feels excluded by the types of things they want to talk about. She responded to my advert because she thought it was something she would be able to talk about:

Molly: So I was quite surprised to have an answer. Cos I thought, oh, you know, there'll be people write in with more interesting stories than me, so I was quite pleased to have an answer.

At no point does she recognise that she thought she would have an answer because of the particular role of television or its importance in her life. In fact, the interview went on to demonstrate that Molly struggled to articulate her relationship with television, or to talk about television at any level other than having enjoyed certain things. Frequently, Molly moved from talking about television to her social life outside the home, in music halls which she evidently found easier to talk around than her relationship with television and which she clearly attached a greater importance to.

If we compare her response to Jenny's (50s) it becomes clear that the two women have very different understandings of the role and the importance of television in their lives:

Jenny: I was intrigued by the subject, um, and as a piece of PhD research. I liked the tone of the advert. I thought it sounded like – I thought the person writing it sounded friendly and warm and somebody that I could respond with quite a personal email to. Um, and I just like the idea. Women and how it's been important in their lives, I thought it was just an interesting idea. Um, because I hadn't really sort of thought about it in that way. What I as a woman – I suppose I had thought about it as what I as a person, but it's quite interesting, the thought of what it's done for me as a woman. Um...so I just. Yes, I was just very intrigued. And when I thought about it, it made me look at particular things in terms of being a woman, being a mother, helped me bond with my child. In terms of helping me feel, if I'm in a house on my own, that I put the television on and I feel less frightened, less worried that I'm in the house on my own. So it's a sort of feeling of making me feel a bit safer.

Jenny's response immediately locates her relationship with television in terms of what she perceives as its value and its personal importance to her, and her intimacy with television is very clear in her response. In the following section, I will consider the role of neoliberalism in younger women's relationship with reflexivity. Jenny's stance here certainly seems to indicate that she is used to reflecting upon herself as well as upon television itself.

### *The Neoliberal Subject*

Theories of individualisation have emphasised the move away from older forms of collective identity practices towards the foregrounding of individual life narratives. The role of television in this process has been assumed, but remains unproven through empirical research. The works of Anthony Giddens (1992) and Ulrich Beck (1992) on modernity and identity indicate that, in a post-industrial society, individuals who become robbed of traditional roles, are compelled to make life plans, and conducting their own subjectivities becomes the centre of their concerns. While neither commentator exacts a thorough critique of the role of the media, in both accounts there is an implicit understanding that it is the media which propagates those messages. Anthony Giddens refers to the increasing 'mediation' of experience in social relationships, wherein the knowledge depicted in the media is re-appropriated by the public. Ulrich Beck, meanwhile, blames television for 'isolation and standardization of experience'. Both Giddens and Beck assume that through the dissemination of certain messages and values, the media helps to configure the disassociation of individuals while at the same time offering compensatory resources through processes of self-reflexivity. However, my interview data indicates, like Beverley Skeggs and Helen Wood's work, that the media and, specifically, television are more about social

*connection* rather than *individuation* (Skeggs and Wood, 2008). While the women interviewed for the purposes of this research articulate their identities with different degrees of reflexivity through talking about television, it is always within the parameters of social interaction.

Sue (60), Tracey (50), Jenny (53) and Dawn (42) were the most articulate interviewees in my sample. Sue was unusual in that she is slightly older, although really on the cusp between two typologies of generational television viewer, but she has worked in the television industry as a regulator for ITV. Her relationship with the medium is a different one to the 'regular' television viewer because she has consistently been forced to engage with her viewing at a level other than entertainment. Of these four, only Jenny was educated to degree level, suggesting that this type of reflexivity need not only be a product of education, but also of generational experience. Tracey and Sue E both left education following their 'A' Levels and Dawn left school at 16 following her 'O' Level exams. Although these four women were the most reflexive, all of the younger women were more reflexive than their older counterparts, consciously placing television within the broader context of their lives and additionally considering the social and personal development dimensions of their television experience without prompting. Rachel Moseley described her sample of younger, post-feminist women as similarly more media aware, deconstructive and analytical, noting the critical distance which characterised their discussion, suggesting that this is a pattern which exists beyond my own interview data (Moseley, 2002).

Rosalind Gill points to the move from objectivity to subjectivity in post-feminist media culture, indicating the way in which neoliberalism constructs individuals as 'entrepreneurial actors who are rational, calculating and self-regulating', highlighting the increased importance of work upon 'self' and governance of 'oneself' as a subject; the neoliberal subject must use what they have to get ahead (Gill, 2007). In Lisa Adkins work on reflexivity, she suggests that 'reflexivity should not be confused with (or understood to concern) a liberal freedom to question and critically deconstruct the rules and norms which previously governed gender...reflexivity is perhaps better conceived as a habit of gender in late modernity' (Adkins, 2003:22). She shows how self-reflexivity is viewed as a "feminine skill" referring to a study of female performance in the workplace (McDowell, 1997). In McDowell's study, reflexive skills were not defined by those who reviewed employee's performance as "competencies" but rather as "natural advantages", as a feminine skill, which should not receive workplace

recognition. Adkins presents reflexivity as a skill of postfeminist femininity. It is certainly a skill that the youngest women mobilised in my interviews, and the shading of reflexive ability from oldest to youngest is striking. The oldest women do not employ any kind of critical reflexivity, while those women in the middle banding project their reflections outwards to the wider world. In the younger women's memories we can see a point where ideas of neoliberalism and feminism meet to create this form of reflexivity around television and self, demonstrating a set of skills which, for women of this age, are desirable to embody.

The physical transcripts of the interviews are a useful aid to measuring this level of younger women's articulacy. When you view a transcript you can see how the younger women's interviews show a more limited input from me, with large tracts of their own talk. The older women's interview transcripts, conversely, tend to have much greater input from me in terms of prompting and trying to get them to tease out their own recollections, feelings and thoughts. In these transcripts, the interviewees have much shorter passages of speech, with much greater to-ing and fro-ing of conversations.

This increased reflexivity has often been linked to discourses of neoliberalism. Christopher Lasch identified the narcissistic personality structure, arising out of social developments of the Twentieth Century, in which individuals' weakened concepts of 'self' led to, among other horrors, fear of commitment, a dread of aging and admiration for fame and celebrity. Lasch viewed this as a 'pathological narcissism', unlike narcissism in the sense that it is usually used to mean a hedonistic egotism, but in the sense of a very weak sense of self, requiring constant internal examination and external validation. Thus arose a 'therapeutic sensibility', or reflexivity and introspection, that undermined older notions of self-help and individual initiative (Lasch, 1979). Where Lasch's view of the reflexive turn is particularly negative, Nick Couldry's position is less critical. While the market language used by neoliberalism normalises a loss of 'voice', for Couldry, the value of that 'voice' is that it is 'embodied in the process of mutually recognizing our claim on each other as reflexive human agents, each with an account of our lives that needs to be registered and heard, our stories endlessly entangled in each other's stories' (Couldry, 2009:580).

The gendered aspect of reflexivity is attended to by Julie McLeod and Katie Wright in their interview work with marginalised young women and their mothers. They concluded that to dismiss a desire for disclosure and open communication as narcissism fails to account for its role for the disadvantaged and that, in fact, recourse

to reflexivity is a productive emotional strategy for managing and for engendering a sense of competence and possibility (McLeod and Wright, 2009). The younger women in my sample were more likely to recognise the importance of television in their lives, but also to identify how the medium had placed itself here.

Hazel: How big a role do you think television's played in your daily life? I think you've said that...

Dawn: I think probably quite big, actually. Yeah.

Hazel: In terms of the influence it's had?

Dawn: I think so

Hazel: Rather than being someone who sits down to watch hours and hours and hours of it?

Dawn: Yeah, I think even despite the fact I was quite selective in what I watched, things like *The Tube* (C4, 1982-1987)<sup>5</sup> and things like that probably kind of helped place me in the youth culture that I was in. And probably say to me it's okay what you're doing and to help me move away from my family. And I think at the same time it probably helped me form ideas about higher aspirations. I mean despite the fact, at the time, I didn't act on them and I was a really poor student...but having said that I did - when I hit 19 I did, I mean I travelled round the world on my own, so maybe in a way it did - it actually made me...it made me have higher aspirations and it made me look at ways of breaking sort of barriers in the only way that I saw possible at that time?

Hazel: Yeah. So do you think it gave you a sense that you were allowed to create your own identity?

Dawn: Yeah, very much so. And I think it showed me that I didn't want the conventional route and that I was allowed to reject it. Um...I suspect that without television I could have been leading a much more conventional standard life. The life that was probably expected.

Or Jenny:

Um...like I say, I think...I think it's helped me...it's helped me at times when I've been very upset with life, been going through a grieving situation, it's helped me bond with my daughter. From a professional point of view. And it's sort of got me in touch with books that I'd probably have never read if they hadn't been adapted. So...at all sorts of levels it's played a very great part in it. It certainly helps me relax and switch off. Because if I read and my eyes hurt I just keep reading the same page again and again and again.

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<sup>5</sup> an innovative United Kingdom pop/rock music television programme



All of the older women in my sample, those in their eighties and nineties, were more likely to suggest that the medium had been useful for entertainment and/or information, but had not been central or important to their lives nor their constructions of identity. This is partly because of how they viewed the medium in less 'worthy' terms. In these older women's talk there is a conscious distancing from television. For example, here Enid (82) grudgingly acknowledges the importance of television news to society as a whole, but this acceptance comes within the framework of an interview which resists recognising that the medium which delivers this news it has been important to her own personal experience, as well as denying the importance of entertainment for entertainment's sake.

Enid: Well...it does play a large part in today's society. Not so much when it first came out and in my earlier days with the young children. It wasn't as important. It has become more important and possibly that's because you can get instant news as well. You know, from around the world. That's changed things such a lot. You know, you used to have to rely on newspapers and – but now it's instant. You can have a running flow of news all day if you wanted. So I do – that is important in...well, I suppose it is, it's very important that you know what's going on. More so than entertainment.

The idea of the neo-liberal subject enables us to understand the younger women's reflexivity in the interview encounter. This is a skill which their historical socialisation has enabled, but how might I explain the older subjects without that ability? What is the history which precludes this skill? If we consider the historical background to these women's adolescence, we can infer that they belong to a generation that has less self-consciousness around identity construction through what they consume. They belong to a generation where larger institutions, such as the state or religion, played a greater role in identity. For these older women subjectivity is more fixed and is determined through how one is subject to these institutions, rather than through consumption which encourages reflexivity and a shifting sense of identity. Mike Featherstone points to how the post-war expansion directed towards education coupled with the media, trained the expanding middle class to make different meanings of material culture and to develop lifestyle as a self-conscious project (Featherstone, 2007). The interview data that I have gathered is a product of such forms of performance and discursive construction, and of the resources that the women have to hand to narrate themselves.

Media literacy emerges as more than one set of circumstances. In the same way that television produces particular language over time, it is also one of the sites which educates us to neoliberalism (Miller, 2006), but also to feminism. Both are enablers for

deeper consideration of television's societal and personal role. This has a particular significance in terms of television's coming of age when related to people's coming of age. In terms of Sonia Livingstone's definition of media literacy, the technology of television can create access to media message, but it is television and feminism and the current socio-political climate which combine to create a greater reflexivity in both media usage and life.

Role of childhood exposure in media literacy.

### *Responses to Technology*

I have already indicated Andrea Press's use of the term 'technological intervention', which indicates that the technology of television is important to the public's various different relationships with the medium. In Tim O'Sullivan's oral history work on the early encroachment of television into British homes he found that men were more likely to discuss the technology than women (O'Sullivan, 1991).

In fact, in my own interviews I discovered a slightly different formation of relationships with the technology than the gendered differentiation which emerged from O'Sullivan's work, instead predicated upon generation. Here, the women in their forties and fifties did not talk about the technology of the television set at all, although they did discuss recording technology and what that brought to their viewing experience, particularly in terms of being able to curate personal collections of programmes and clips during adolescence. It was the widespread adoption of recording in the domestic environment which was the broadcasting technology that was new to their lives and that represented a 'technological intervention' and it was this that they spoke about rather than the unremarkable and ever-present television set.

For the women who did experience television entering their home, either during childhood or adulthood, conversations of 'first memories of television' typically started with a description of their first television set, often detailing the differences between television sets 'then' and 'now' to me. For the oldest women the circumstances surrounding their acquisition of 'the set' were also important facts to set out:

Hazel: Okay, shall we start off then. We'll go back and if you could tell me about your earliest experiences of television?

Enid: Well...it was when I was first married that – we didn't have a television to start with. It was when my daughter was a baby and she's fifty two now. So she would be just a baby when we had the first television, and

it was just a seven inch black and white set that stood on a chair in the corner [talk of programmes] I think...that...it was a very old one. It wasn't a new one, it was a second hand one that someone was getting rid of. I don't think that my husband would have bought a new television. He just relented because someone he knew wanted to get rid of his telly and he bought it from him. I mean, the children were quite young at that time and they didn't know about television until we got one [The Coronation] But we...I didn't know anybody else who had one, in those early days. It was like having a telephone or a car or things like that. Or a fridge! You just didn't have them if you were ordinary people. When we were first married – a washing machine. You just didn't have – now when you get married you expect to have all those things, well you didn't then. So it wasn't something where you thought 'oh I must have a television'. You didn't think about it.

Enid's attitude to the acquisition of her first television points to her generational history. Her early identity period of adolescence pre-dates consumer culture which creates a very different relationship with consumption and the expectations of 'ordinary people' to being able to own such consumer durables (Lury, 2011).

For Joan (95), the oldest woman in my sample, my question about first memories of television prompted a very different story to most. She recalled how her father had 'invented' television, which he perceived as 'wireless with pictures' in around 1913. He took the idea to some manufacturers of wireless sets, who sent him away because the idea would never work. Her recollections of her own first television set were clouded by memories of her father's bitterness about the whole affair and how long it took him to come round to watching a programme. As my oldest interviewee it is interesting that Joan's first memories of television extended so far beyond even the medium's first introduction.

The women in their sixties, who were children during their first television experiences, described their first memories of television in terms of their feelings of excitement and superiority when their family purchased their first television or, conversely, how much they desperately wanted a television set when other friends had one before they did. For many, the image of walking home from school to see the aerial on the roof was still poignant, all the more so if they had been walking home with friends who also saw the visible evidence of the family's new purchase. Women in their forties and fifties, however, deprived of such memories of the introduction of television to their homes would instead launch straight in to a nostalgic detailing of their childhood programmes rather than technology. We can see here a clear depiction of Andrea Press' idea of television as "technological intervention" and how the period of life where this occurs, if it is experienced at all, creates a particular relationship with the medium of television.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how generational membership directly impacts mediated subjectivities. Superficially, because of the similarities of the narration of the specifics of how they live their lives, the inclusion of generation suggests great continuities across women's lives. The same themes emerge across most interviews, comprising conversation about childcare, bonding with children, shouldering domestic responsibility and gender roles. A clear picture emerges from my interviews of a continued traditional and gendered domestic organisation, where women still shoulder the burden of housework. However, the generational framework that I have used also illuminates the breaks and shifts in this apparent *status quo*. While the experience of being a woman remains relatively, and some might say depressingly, static, the experience of being a woman who watches television and, most significantly, how they articulate that experience, has been significantly diverse for women of different generations.

Concepts of Modernity have underscored a constant media studies search for difference rather than continuity. The active nature of the jettisoning of tradition, which is characteristic of modernity, leads the modern to be understood as masculine, while women are pitied for their entrapment in the habitual and home-centred aspects of daily life which remains steadfastly outside modernity (Sparke, 1995). What the women's memories gathered here begin to illuminate is how the "leaky boundaries" (Felski, 1999) between public and private do enact change for women across generations within a familiar and unchanging domestic environment.

As following chapters will further highlight, the periodisation of an individuals' socialisation is central to subjectivity and the beliefs and values that an individual holds true. As such, it needs to be considered and understood as a discourse alongside those factors more traditionally utilised such as gender, class position, race and sexuality. The consideration of generation inflects all of chapters which follow.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TASTE, VALUE, JUDGEMENT

In the previous chapter I showed how theories of generation can usefully be applied to television audiences. While often neglected in studies of television reception at the expense of class, gender or race, generation in fact cuts through the recollection of women's recollections of their television viewing experience at a number of levels. In this chapter, I expand upon the theme of generation, considering the role that generational positioning plays in forming taste preferences. In Chapter Three I considered the role of performance in the qualitative interview. The nature of the interview as a performance enables taste to be performed throughout my encounters with the women in the way that it has been.

Over the course of this chapter I will indicate how generation and gender come together to form taste paradigms, but also why these performances have been enacted. I begin with an outline of Pierre Bourdieu's typology of taste (Bourdieu, 1984), while also noting the limitations of his work when applied to television. Television's central role in marking cultural value (Huysen, 2002; Skeggs and Wood, 2012) will be examined throughout the remainder of the chapter, with attention paid to questions around quality, distinction and identity performance which occurred in most interviews to some extent. Questions of taste and distinction were particularly apparent in the interviews with women who identified themselves as having had working class upbringings. These interviews were informative in their attendance to questions around taste, distinction, judgement and value.

#### *Bourdieu and the Typology of Taste*

Bourdieu's understanding of society is based on the movement of capital, that which can be traded for advantage, through social spaces as it is used by individuals. The vacillations of the Marxist concept of economic capital are well accounted for, but Bourdieu proposes other metaphorical forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986:243). His model of cultural capital exists in three different states: in an embodied state in the form of durable dispositions in the mind and body; in an objectified state in the form of cultural goods such as books or paintings; and in an institutionalised state which might take the form of academic credentials. Like economic capital, cultural capital can be accumulated and lost, invested and distributed within a specific social field. This social

field where cultural capital is traded is the place of competition between individuals or institutions that are competing for the same stake (Bourdieu 1986). Power is achieved by the ability to confer or withdraw legitimacy from the other participants. Each field generates a specific habitus, a system of dispositions and a “feel for the game” (Bourdieu 1990, 66). The notion of habitus is the means by which we acquire ways of being through practice and socialisation rather than through conscious, formalised learning, throughout our whole lives.

In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, published in France in 1979 and translated into English in 1984, Pierre Bourdieu developed theories of social stratification based on aesthetic taste. The ways in which an individual chooses to present their aesthetic disposition is the depiction of their status, working by distancing themselves from lower groups. These dispositions are internalized at an early age, guiding the young towards their appropriate social positions, towards a preference for the behaviours and choices that are suitable for their particular social position, and an aversion towards other behaviours. Bourdieu suggests that it is within class factions, determined by social, economic and cultural capital, that the young internalise these aesthetic preferences. Society incorporates “symbolic goods, especially those regarded as the attributes of excellence...the ideal weapon in strategies of distinction.” (Bourdieu, 1984:66), and those attributes deemed excellent are shaped by the interests of the dominating class. “Taste classifies, and it classifies the classer. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinction they make between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed.” (*Ibid*: 6).

Bourdieu’s typology of taste corresponds to different levels of education and class positions. The “legitimate”, or “highbrow”, taste belongs to the highly educated, who display an aesthetic disposition prioritising form over content, while the “popular”, often characterised as “lowbrow”, taste is associated with people with a lower level of education, who prioritise the practical over the aesthetic. An intermediate, “middlebrow” taste is mostly attributed to the petite bourgeoisie with an intermediate level of education. However, for Bourdieu, the degree to which social origin affects these preferences surpasses both educational and economic capital, and he indicates how at equivalent levels of educational capital, social origin remains the influential factor in determining these dispositions (*Ibid*: 63). How one describes one’s social environment

relates closely to social origin because the instinctive narrative springs from early stages of development.

There has been an increasing engagement of contemporary feminist theory with Bourdieu's work as a means of understanding societal power relations and the creation of gender identities (Moi 1991; Skeggs and Adkins 2005; McNay, 1999; Lovell 2000). Bourdieu is often criticised for not directly inscribing gender analysis into his theories, but Toril Moi makes a strong case for the appropriation of Bourdieu's work. She highlights how Bourdieu's theories on everyday life offer us the tools to understand how gender is lived out, enabling us to "link the humdrum details of everyday life to a more general social analysis of power" (Moi 1991, 1020). In Chapter Two I drew attention to the ongoing denigration of feminine cultures and genres which often become aligned with mass, low brow culture (Huyssen, 1986). Beverley Skeggs has suggested that, for Bourdieu, cultural capital is always associated with high culture, making it difficult to see different variants of femininity as a form of cultural capital (Skeggs 2005), and the constant necessity to "trade up", as with economic capital, means that women are often unable to compete. Rachel Moseley further suggests that if we exist in the social field as necessarily gendered individuals, then the notion of gendered habitus can be understood as the process of learning to be a social woman (or man) part of which is the acquisition of attributes and dispositions which are socioculturally gendered feminine (or masculine) and which enable us to 'play the game' effectively (Moseley, 2002). The kind of detailed looking, talking and remembering suggested by Moseley's research and in my own can be usefully conceptualised in this way.

Although Bourdieu views taste as most manifest in the ordinary choices of everyday existence, such as furniture, clothing, or cooking or appearance because their existence outside the scope of the formal educational system means they must be "confronted, as it were, by naked taste" (1984:77). These choices are particularly revealing of deep-rooted and long-standing dispositions because of this. Despite this turn to questions of the ordinary and everyday, Bourdieu gives television little attention. The object of television is almost invisible in *Distinction*. When he moves to address this oversight in his 1996 work *On Television*, he does so largely through the prism of "legitimate" journalism rather than the more ordinary programming which makes up the majority of television's flow. Although Bourdieu suggests that objects of bourgeois high culture have no intrinsic aesthetic merits of their own, that they are little more than tokens of value in the game of class distinction that transforms bourgeois taste into

legitimate taste, through his television choices he himself demonstrates a preference for such high cultural artefacts.

Regardless of Bourdieu's inattention to television, his theories on cultural production have been particularly apparent through my interviewees' expressions of taste and distinction.

'To the socially recognized hierarchy of the arts, and within each of them, of genres, schools or periods, corresponds a social hierarchy of consumers. This predisposes tastes to function as markers of 'class'. The manner in which culture has been acquired lives on in the manner of using it: the importance attached to manners can be understood once it is seen as these imponderables of practice which distinguish the different – and ranked – modes of culture acquisition.' (Bourdieu, 1984:1-2).

For Bourdieu, although the high arts offer the greatest scope to the aesthetic disposition there is no area of culture in which the aim of "purifying, refining and sublimating primary needs and impulses cannot assert itself" (*Ibid*: 6), and this has substantively been the case in larger UK studies with a broader cultural outlook by Warde et al (2008) and Tony Bennett (2009) as well as in my interviewees' responses to the despised object of television specifically. Viewing television has the least to contribute to cultural capital, because it is not exclusive and everybody has the competency to do it (Warde et al, 2008). Yet, it is precisely through this position that television carves out a means by which subjects can perform themselves and their cultural values. With television there is always a point of reference that is understood widely enough to effectively demonstrate subjectivities. Its very ubiquity, which marks it as so culturally lowbrow, also gives television cultural value.

Charlotte Brunsdon asks "who can speak about culture?" (2005:1) invokes the questions of social control and power which circulate around the reproduction of taste hierarchies and judgements. Feminist research has been occupied by questions of power and women's relationship to that distribution. Although low brow and denigrated by many of the women I spoke to, what is clear is that television, arguably the most democratic of cultural forms, and inhabiting the domestic sphere, offers a space for everyone to talk about culture and, more specifically, to perform one's own cultural values. Increasingly television is a significant part of how we perform our identities and, indeed, our gendered identities and as such is "always established in importance according to other objects and practices, forming a taste-based ecology that brings the



organisation of materiality into effect: television is performative.” (Skeggs and Wood, 2011:943).

Bourdieu has been criticised for over-emphasising class as a factor at the expense of gender, and some distance has been covered in rectifying this imbalance, but the importance of the relationship between taste and generation is still under-investigated. For Andrea Press, who incorporated gender, class and generation as analytical categories, Bourdieu’s relevance to her work on taste was about class and the “realness” of depictions of life in both fiction and factual programming that working class American women sought in their television viewing (Press, 1991:101). Press did not address the significance of generation in her discussion of taste. However, as I discussed in Chapter Four, the generational relevance of Bourdieu’s work has been outlined by June Edmunds and Bryan S Turner who draw attention to Bourdieu’s consideration of generation which is scattered across a prodigious output (Edmunds and Turner, 2002:13-16). It may be without a specific focus, but it is definitely there. Across such works as *Homo Academicus* (1988), *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993a) and *Sociology in Question* (1993b) Bourdieu establishes how the maintenance of the distinction between being fashionable and out of fashion necessitates constant revolutions in taste, cultural objects and genres which is directly caused by the intensity of the struggle for cultural resources between generational groups. While class position determines the broad parameters of taste and value within each cultural field, it is in fact the generational struggle which has greater significance in major ruptures in taste and practice. This struggle needs to be considered in relation to television as programming itself plays such a significant role in targeting generation and popular memory (Anderson, 2001; Holdsworth, 2011).

### *Quality and Legitimacy*

The question of what constitutes quality programming is absolutely central to how many of the women construct their hierarchies of taste. Questions of quality and aesthetics have long been interrogated by the academic community. Christine Geraghty stages something of an intervention into the current fashion for British academic interest in so-called “quality American dramas” such as *The Wire* and *Mad Men*. She notes that many of the aspects of these programmes which receive critical acclaim, such as the slow unfolding of narrative arcs across series, in fact existed in critically ignored soap operas long before HBO cottoned on to the idea (Geraghty, 2010). The extent to which this type of praise for the masculine becomes reproduced

and ideas about the feminisation of lowbrow, mass cultural genres are internalised was amply portrayed by my interviewees. Their enjoyment of quality television was frequently invoked throughout the interviews whilst at the same time many tried to distance themselves from feminised genres such as soap opera. Many of the women clearly understood soap operas as a denigrated genre, which they placed low down in the viewing taste hierarchies which they presented to me.

Quality of television, then, and the ability to express how we recognise and relate to that quality is increasingly the means by which subjects are able to perform their superior taste and distinction. Ellen Seiter recounts her own experience of such expression in her case study of a troubling interview (Seiter, 1990). Seiter notes that her interviewees' presentation of themselves to her and her colleague, both middle class academics, showed recourse to middle class values. This performance of middle class values was apparent in the way the men talked about programming, their attitudes to television and in terms of what programmes they enjoyed. She concludes by calling upon Bourdieu's proposition that 'the relationship of distinction is objectively inscribed within [the field of cultural goods], and is reactivated, intentionally or not, in each act of consumption, through the instruments of economic and cultural appropriation which it requires (Bourdieu, 1984:226, quoted by Seiter).

However, this default to middle class tastes and values is not a temporally static state of affairs. Which values and taste choices are imbued with legitimacy can alter over time and between generations. The term "cultural omnivore" (Peterson, 1992) refers to people of higher social status who, contrary to traditionally received ideas of elite-mass models of cultural taste, also participate in popular, lowbrow culture activities. The term "omnivore" is employed to denote their eclectic tastes, a taste for everything. In their broad survey of cultural omnivores, Warde et al. found that even those who enjoyed a cultural portfolio which included elements of both "high" and "low" cultures sought to distance themselves from television, suggesting that television remains at the very bottom of the cultural hierarchy (Warde et al, 2008). My own interviews yielded an interesting dynamic around the medium. Many of the women chose to distance themselves from television with claims about not watching television during the day or being extremely selective about their viewing, whereas the fullness of the interviews in fact revealed strong viewing relationships with specific programmes and the technology of the set as is more commonly reported in television audience research. Younger women were more likely to admit to the cultural value that they afforded to television.

However, my experiences with the interviews also indicated the dual character of the audience's relationship with television. Despite its low status, the response of one woman, Tracey, to my first question – “what made you respond to my advert?” – indicated that it had been because she initially thought my research would act as a precursor to some type of television programme about audiences and television. She had been excited by the prospect of appearing on television, although she tried to downplay this response by exclaiming ‘not that I would have been that bothered, of course’. I was also surprised when, a couple of months later, while distractedly watching *A History of the Grammar School* on BBC4 I heard Sue E's name. On looking up I was confronted by the same woman I myself had interviewed about her memories of television between 1947 and 1989. Television may have a low status as cultural object, but it still offers an opportunity for fame. It may be taken for granted and despised, yet the prospect of appearing on that object is desirable. Television is indeed the everyday, but it still holds the power to excite. These women's responses indicate that appearing on television can in some way give our modern lives value.<sup>6</sup> That this appearance on television is a form of cultural capital, even though the object itself is afforded so little cultural capital.

### *Class Position*

Out of thirty interviews, those with Lynda, Belinda and Enid drew particularly upon questions of taste, judgement and distinction. This concentration is a product of the interview encounter itself, during which the interviewees enact value through their relationship with television. Through the process of the interview as a self-reflexive and performative encounter this becomes a double enactment of value (Skeggs, Thumim and Wood, 2008) Here I attend to these interviews in detail, as a means of interrogating the way that working class subjects may take up legitimate, highbrow aesthetic tastes.

Belinda and Enid were also two of my most outspoken interviewees in terms of class positioning. Both women spoke at length about their working class upbringings and subsequent mobility into the middle class. Despite finding capital and worth in their working class backgrounds, presenting this part of their lives as something they were proud of and which they felt had made them the women they had become, both also

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<sup>6</sup> Appearing on television has become increasingly more accessible, however even that accessibility creates further taste divisions, in which, for example, the reality celebrity is the worst form. While there is little evidence for this in my data, with only Tracey and Sue E alluding to the possibility, it is a point of interest that they are among the younger women in my sample. It is tantalising to wonder how far the importance of being on television might have a different inflection for different generations.

presented their social mobility as something desirable and the middle class values that they now inhabited as somehow superior. Working class taste is always something that needs to be left behind if a new middle class position is to be taken up (Lawler, 2005). Lynda was harder to pin down in terms of social class. She was unusual in that she spoke very little about her family life as a child, whereas for most other women it was that type of childhood viewing experience that they most wanted to narrate, and declined to respond to my question about her parent's jobs or to fill in the demographic profile. She preferred to converse upon the family that she had created for herself as an adult.

Lynda was the youngest of the three women at 64. Her interview can be read as a treatise on her superior distinction in viewing. Lynda did not frame her superior taste and distinction in opposition to "lower class" viewing, as others did, but in absolute terms. Lynda did not only use heavyweight, serious factual programming to demonstrate her superior taste, although she was one of the few interviewees who discussed the early wildlife programmes on the BBC presented by Michaela and Armand Denis. She also represented her viewing in terms of foreign language, subtitled programming, including *Wallander* (BBC4, 2008-2010) and *The Killing* (BBC4, 2011-1012), "good historical drama" such as *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (BBC, 1970) and *Elizabeth R* (BBC2, 1971) and on one occasion *Les Rois Maudits* (BBC2, 1974), a combination of the two. Janice Radway ascertained that the women often seemed to be working out conscious rationalisations for their romance reading, legitimating lowbrow romantic fiction novels by linking them with other approved values, such as learning about history or foreign cultures (Radway, 1984). There is a very similar logic at play in Lynda's narrative of her viewing choices as described here. Yes, this is culturally lowbrow medium of television, but it is television which is linked with history and foreign culture, giving it more cultural and educational prestige. Even in her comedy preferences she expresses a preference for what she describes as 'cerebral comedy' over slapstick:

Lynda: Ronnie Barker when he used to do *Porridge*. I used to love that.

Hazel: What did you like about *Porridge*?

Lynda: It was just funny. Um...I didn't like the things like – there was something called *Love Thy Neighbour*, and I hated that sort of thing. And *On the Buses*. I hated that, I've just never really liked slapsticky type comedy. But because things like *Porridge* were well written, proper, well thought out words. Not just showing slapstick.

Hazel: It wasn't all about making you laugh, was it? It was about making you think as well.

Lynda: Yeah. Cerebral comedy.

At least in the terms of the narrative she has chosen to offer to me, it is not enough for Lynda that television comedy might simply make her laugh. It must also be clever and well written, and she uses her attention to that to mark herself out as distinguished during our interview encounter.

Belinda (72) was very keen to present herself as someone who has no time for 'trivial' television and presented herself as someone who prefers to immerse herself in serious, factual programming. Up until the end of the interview, her response to questions about favourite programming always conformed to this aspect of her character. As a child she enjoyed watching *The Brains Trust*, (BBC, 1955-1961), as a teenager she was too busy doing homework for her grammar school education to watch television and as an adult she has enjoyed watching and participating in programmes such as *Question Time* (BBC1, 1979-present), *Panorama* (BBC1, 1953-present) and *Right to Reply* (Channel 4, 1982-2001). Throughout the interview she explicitly expressed a preference for heavy weight, factual and political programming. When she did discuss drama it was similarly couched in political terms, along with the additional high-brow inflection of literary association which was also apparent in Lynda's preferences:

Hazel: Um...have any programmes had a particular impact on you in any way?

Belinda: There have been so many really. But I can't think. Obviously things like the election. The General Election, things like that. Because, you know, I've been actively involved. So those kinds of things you remember. [??] Um...what in terms of weepies or something like that?

Hazel: Well, just things that maybe have even influenced you in some way or, yes, have left you feeling afterwards for a long...have maybe left you thinking about them for a long time afterwards. Or...

Belinda: Well it must have stayed with me. Cos I'm sure it was on television, not a film, when they, um, did the – adapted the book Vera Brittain's *A Testament to Youth*. Do you know that book?

Hazel: Yes. Yeah.

Belinda: So that must have made an impact, cos that was some years ago and then recently I've been doing walks round London – I do this on Wednesday. And last term we were doing writing and, um, writing in London. And the tutor said we had to produce a little bit of work. You know, three hundred words. Can't believe I'm doing this. And the first person I immediately thought of cos she

appealed to me or whatever was Vera Brittain to do about her life, or whatever. So it's that kind of political thing that's had an impact on me.

At another point in the interview when I asked Belinda about what others had thought about the types of programmes she liked to watch, she responded by telling me what she thought about her mother and sister's viewing choices. In her response, she drew attention to their social stasis, the working class jobs that they still do (cleaner and factory worker) and the fact that they have not managed to change, before belittling the programming that they choose to view and reaffirming that those are not viewing choices that she would make. Interestingly, however, towards the end of the interview she began to reveal aspects of her viewing past that were not so high brow, including her enjoyment of Royal Ascot because she liked to see what clothes the women were wearing and her love of *The Clothes Show* (BBC1, 1986-2000), again because of her enjoyment of fashion. These viewing preferences were expressed as something of a guilty pleasure. Her enjoyment of the clothes may also be related to her age, in that such an association with clothing might have a higher cultural value for someone who grew up with different consumer values during a time when clothing was still rationed.

At 82, Enid was the eldest of the three. Enid's responses were similar to Belinda's when I asked what others had thought of her viewing choices, although she displayed a greater self-awareness of the position of judgement that she occupied. She stated that people had not really expressed opinions about her viewing, going on to note that it is more likely to be her who would express such value judgements about others' viewing. Enid was similarly keen to present herself as a serious person, with a greater affinity for factual programming, but also worked hard to show how her life experience has imbued her with greater knowledge and understanding which had led her to jettison certain types of low quality, cheaply made programming. When she watches drama her preference is for quality literary adaptations:

Enid: I mean it was always the classic dramas on Sunday night. Wasn't it?

Hazel: Yes.

Enid: And I made a point of watching those. Like Dickens and Jane Austen. From years and years ago. I know they do them now, but they've always done. The BBC always did a lot of that.

Hazel: Why do you think you always made a point of watching those?

Enid: Because I thought they were very good productions, it was something that if you were trying to get the children to read as they got older, you wanted them to read classics as well, and that would encourage them to read the books. Apart

from their own sort of more modern ones. We always had a lot of books in the house, and, um...but they were extremely good productions and very well done. They excelled at those. It's a shame they seem to be cutting back such a lot now, aren't they?

Hazel: I think it's expensive to produce, isn't it?

Enid: It's very expensive to produce. I'm sure it is. And that's why the reality things are so big. Because they're cheap.

Like Lynda and Janice Radway's participants, Enid is legitimating her viewing choices by linking them to approved values such as reading quality literary classics and, significantly, engaging her children with that legitimate culture. She makes the connection between other forms of programming and their relative cheapness of production, drawing attention to the comparative quality of her own choices.

The significance of the cultural and commercial aspects of nostalgia to memory work and television's self-memorialisation (Boym, 2001; Holdsworth, 2011) will be considered in greater detail in Chapter Six. In terms of taste and appreciation of what makes "quality" it is worth foreshadowing that discussion here. Enid's interview indicates the cultural cachet of nostalgia in terms of her attention to period details.

Enid: No. Because I came from a very, um, poor background. And, um, even the ones that reflect...and the one that's been on very recently, the midwives programme – I can't stand it because I don't think it's – I'm shouting all the time 'It wasn't like that!' and yet other people seem to think it's wonderful and yet it wasn't. They're not reflecting the life, and that would be a time that I know a lot about. And I just can't watch it. I don't like it at all because it really annoys me. They don't do enough research into things like that, the producers. The producers and the people who are getting things like this together, they don't do the proper research into an era that older people know a lot about.

Hazel: Why do you think they don't bother?

Enid: Well, because they're young and they think they know all about it, and they read something or they'll look it up on the internet, but they don't find out from the people. I would like a group of older people to be able to be called on and asked their opinion of things if a particular programme was going to be about the Thirties, Forties, Fifties and I think there should be a group to consult. You know, instead of just looking they should talk to people about it and ask them questions rather than taking it from, um, any written account. And I think that would help. And you see such glaring things that are wrong. What was it I saw the other night? I mean something really stupid it was, and I thought 'that wouldn't have happened then'. I know, it might seem very silly, and I can't remember the programme now, but it was showing couples walking, um, a man and a woman walking along roads and it was quite busy. And every one of those men were on the inside and the women were on the outside. They were arm in arm and that would of never happened. And it was supposed to be the Fifties, Fifties time. And that would of never happened. No matter how lowly you were, men from

rough areas, men always walked on the outside if it was a couple. And little things like that are always cropping up.

Hazel: I suppose it's little details of how things actually felt and...it's easy to find out how things looked. You know, how interiors would have looked but it's not easy to know how it felt to live that life without people?

Enid: I think that's what's wrong with that *Upstairs and Downstairs* [sic] that hasn't clicked properly because they haven't got it right.

Hazel: The new one?

Enid: The new one. The old one was very good, but the new one...there's just something that they've not got right. And there are so many – and the way they speak in a modern idiom, especially the below stairs. They say things that just weren't around in those days.

Enid wears her age and her memories as value. Her personal memories of a past time give her a specialist knowledge which the people who write for television, people who are significantly younger than she is, do not have. Enid is letting me, also a “young person”, know that television in the old days, the days before I knew, was “better” than television today is. The argument that Enid makes is that it was better on all counts; there was better quality production, better quality research and better family viewing.

One of the most notable aspects of these women's response to demonstrating their middle class taste is its reliance upon what they have chosen to watch and the ways they have chosen to watch it. Compare this to the demonstration of taste by Dawn, much younger at 42, and also very articulate on her own class mobility recognising her working class upbringing and subsequent movement into a middle class position. Dawn emphatically did not perform her taste in terms of what she had watched, happily admitting to watching a variety of programmes which included ‘quality’ programming, but also more populist light entertainment programmes such as *Blind Date* (ITV, 1985-2003) and *The Apprentice* (BBC2, 2005-2006; BBC1, 2007-present) as well as channels such as MTV. She is omnivorous in her television pleasures. Dawn preferred instead to assert her appreciation of quality and to wear her cultural knowledge through the employment of an extremely reflexive approach to appraising her relationship with certain programmes.

Interestingly, Dawn (42) was also very articulate in terms of her working class background and subsequent social mobility. While she was equally keen to distance herself from her past and the choices her other family members had made, she did this not through performing her taste in terms of what was watched but how she talked about it (Seiter, 1990). Her conversation, rather than concentrating upon quality



programming, was more concerned with a reflexive approach to her viewing and the paratexts of viewing.

### *Generationally gendered identities*

There emerges a clear generational difference here, one which has been under-investigated in explorations of taste. I do not deny that social class clearly and irrevocably is the driving force in formations of taste. It is notable that the socially mobile, older working class women were particularly keen to assert their taste formations by demonstrating their viewing in terms of middle class ideals and values. More 'comfortably' middle class women of this generation also expressed these preferences, but they did not work so hard to demonstrate their distinction in the interviews. However, because fields exist in different periods, and because people's life stages collide with these fields at different times the expectation of what does and does not fall within the parameters of what might be considered "good taste", and how that taste will be articulated, will necessarily be different. When looking at tastes and cultural preferences around Dutch television comedy, Giseline Kuipers noted how far these sensibilities are products of the period of our socialisation as an adult (Kuipers, 2006). While social class is clearly indicative of taste paradigms, there is also a clear generational difference in the ways women in their 40s and 50s performed their taste values to how those women in their 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s did.

In his survey of British taste, Tony Bennett constructed a hierarchy of audience attitudes to the perceived legitimacy of various television genres. Quizzes, game shows, soap operas, reality television and chat shows were ranked overall and "low legitimacy", while news/current affairs, arts programmes, documentaries and drama were ranked as having 'high legitimacy' (Bennett, 2006). The older women in my qualitative study constructed similar hierarchies of television genres which corresponded to the findings of Bennett et al. It is particularly striking how many of those genres ranked as having "low legitimacy" were referred to in Chapter Two as feminine genres. This generational positioning is clear here, with many of the older women constructing increasingly complex rationalisation around their hierarchies to explain why they do like some of the programmes contained within genres that they have ranked as low status. The reality TV genre was particularly common in this type of wrangling, as shown by my discussion with Belinda about different examples of the genres:

Belinda: *Strictly Come Dancing?* *Britain's Got Talent?* But I whizz through that as well. Very, very quickly. I only want to see who got thrown out.

Hazel: Right

Belinda: *X Factor*, no. Sports, no.

Hazel: So you quite like *Britain's Got Talent*, but you don't like *X Factor*?

Belinda: No. I mean, you get too much of the backstories in *X Factor*, don't you? [HC: Yes] It's really, really, really boring. You've got to go through an awful lot of rubbish before you see anything that's...and really they're all much of a muchness. Everybody who wins. You know, you could've seen them two or three times before – occasionally you do get the odd one.

Lynda also identified reality television as a genre which she did not have time for, before she realised that she did sometimes watch such programmes. She jumped upon my suggestion that some reality shows might be humiliating to justify her enjoyment of others that were not. Her hierarchy ranks "humiliation" reality television shows such as *The X Factor* (ITV1, 2004-present) and *I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here* (ITV1, 2002-present) as lower than a competition such as *Strictly Come Dancing* (BBC1, 2004-present), which she saw as more valid because the contestants are bettering themselves by learning a new skill:

Lynda: I don't like things like *X Factor* or that thing in the jungle.

Hazel: The sort of reality?

Lynda: Ooh, *Strictly Come Dancing*. I do like that one.

Hazel: So you like *Strictly Come Dancing*, but you don't like the other reality things.

Lynda: No.

Hazel: Humiliation reality things?

Lynda: Oh no! No. That thing that used to be on Channel 4 where they lived in a house. *Big Brother* – oh no, no, no. I don't see the point of that. No, as you say it's basically just humiliation. Not entertainment. Not to me.

These mediated identities change not only across generations, but over time as an individual moves through generations. Television fulfils different roles at different points in our lives. In their work on women's use and viewing of television and other media, Beverley Skeggs and Helen Wood draw attention to the difference in attitude to television between two of their interviewees, Deirdre and Joan. Deirdre, who was younger and middle class, worried over television watching as a "waste of time", but Joan, who was retired and suffering with limited mobility, described television as a "way

to fill time” (Skeggs and Wood, 2011:947-948). Skeggs and Wood highlight this difference mostly in class terms, but they also draw attention to the importance of television to Joan precisely because of her age and mobility problems suggesting that the question of age is also important. In my own research, we see a similar dynamic when Marilyn discusses her mother. Marilyn begins by reiterating Enid’s assertion that television was better in the old days, but then moves into worrying what broadcasting is available for the older generation:

Marilyn: Saturday night is a night I call the night all the family get together, when you should have all these shows. But at the moment we’ve got nothing on to watch. They used to have lovely programmes on like The London Palladium, the Black and White Minstrels. Things for the family to watch. Not even a good film. Not even a good film that you could go to – I mean a lot of the older people haven’t got Sky, so if you look at their channels. I mean, my mother’s only got four, there’s nothing for her to watch at the moment. On a Saturday night. There’s nothing on for her.

Hazel: Yes. It’s as if they’re trying to attract people who are the sort of age who are going out I think.

Marilyn: Yes.

Hazel: Which is a bit silly. Because they’re not there to watch it.

Marilyn: Well you’ve got it in one. So there’s nothing for the older element now at home to watch. To get into. My mother, bless her, you know when they make it on to X Factor, like Pop Stars was on, although I don’t really like it I watch it for her. Cos she only lives about eight minutes from me, but we ring each other up and I say ‘what do you think of that, and that? And I’m looking at this one’ and then it finished. ‘What am I going to watch now?’ she said because there’s nothing else on. ‘There’s nothing on for me at my age’. And I said, ‘you’re absolutely right’. And I looked down all the charts on my TV Times and I said ‘Mum, you’re right love’. I looked for different programmes for her, and alright she’s got Freeview now, but there’s still not a lot for her to watch. Television has gone down so much.

Marilyn does not so much lament the lack of television that she herself wants to watch, but is worried about how her mother will occupy herself. We see how identities are fluid, not static, across the life course and relationships with television change.

### *Distance*

That women distanced themselves from television as an object has been discussed at length here already. Perhaps more interesting was the distance that many of the

women put between themselves and the idea of 'women's television'. Vicky Ball draws attention to the partiality of television histories that reaffirm existing gendered hierarchies of cultural value, noting that "areas of culture tied to 'the feminine' have not only been marked out as gendered in comparison with the masculine norm, but have also been classified, enjoying low cultural status because of their association with women and femininity" (Ball, 2013: 244). Work on the gendered and class dimensions of reality television viewing, and how the genre is always placed at the bottom of hierarchies have been well attended to (Skeggs, Thumim and Wood, 2008; Skeggs and Wood, 2011). I suggest that generation is also a factor in the understanding of the value of feminine genres. Older women are demoting feminine genres to the bottom of the hierarchy but, significantly, the younger women did not do the same. They were more likely to demonstrate culturally omnivorous tendencies, as discussed earlier, and did not tend to hierarchise their preferences in the same way. However, in their greater acceptance of the value of feminine genres, we can see the cultural influence and absorption of feminist discourses. In most cases, women of all generations struggled with the idea of what television was, often running through similar conversational motifs in their attempts to unpick what they thought it might be. These would run them through examples of the types of programmes it might be, usually starting with *Loose Women* (ITV, 1999-present) and expanding this into daytime magazine and talk shows, which they almost universally characterised as low status, low quality and low aspirational;

Hazel: So do you think there's a reason maybe that you haven't particularly watched – do you think you don't enjoy programmes that are specifically made for women or do you think you haven't really watched it because you don't watch during the day?

Lynda: I haven't really thought about it. To be honest. I watch what appeals to me. I watch what I find interesting or stimulating or educational. I like to come away from a programme thinking 'ooh, I never thought about that before' which, you know, is getting a bit harder as I get older. But, um...yes, so...

Lynda's clear implication is that women's television could never be stimulating or educational. Very rarely did the interviewees at this point go on to interrogate the idea that programmes they had particularly enjoyed might constitute 'television for women' suggesting that they have internalised arguments about women's culture as "mass" and "low" and of little value (Huyssen, 1986).

The distance they put between themselves and this type of television is interesting. "I'm not a typical woman" was a phrase used in a number of interviews. The legitimisation of male activities at the expense of female activities has been well attended to (Fraser

and Nicholson, 1988; Sparke, 1995; Bennett, 2009), with the most common example being that women are significantly more likely to read books by male authors than vice versa. However, their self-removal from identification with their own gender suggests that culturally a significant number of the women I spoke to were not only distancing themselves from women's television but from femaleness itself. Here we see an attempt to distance themselves not only from the public everyday consumption of low status feminine genres, but also from the horror of conforming to ideas of 'the typical woman', representing all that might entail.

This question arose from the wider project that my PhD research is attached to. My colleague Mary Irwin has considered a range of programming from early magazine shows produced by the BBC's Women's Programmes department in the 1950s and 1960s, (Leisure and Pleasure [1951–54], Wednesday Magazine [1958], and ITV's Morning Magazine [1955]), which addressed themes of citizenship, global politics and the arts (Irwin, 2011 & 2013). Despite this rich television history of heavyweight programmes aimed at women, for many of my interviewees the idea that programming might have been created for and addressed to them specifically as women was often seen as patronising:

Hazel: Okay. If I said – what do you think it would be about a programme that would make it a programme that was for women?

Enid: Um...it's difficult because I don't like things that are done specifically for women or for men. I think things can have a wider appeal, um, to both. I feel quite, um...anti things that are made just for women. Even though I shouldn't say that because I don't watch them.

Hazel: Well, presumably you don't watch them because you don't fancy them? Why do you think you feel like that? What is it that puts you off?

Enid: Um...maybe it's because I feel that there's far too much emphasis put on individual groups these days. Whether it's gender, um...sexual orientation, religion or whatever...there's a lot of talk about everything being integrated and, um, people should accept other forms of um, other lives. Yet they make it worse by making individuals, or individual groups...doing special things for them. I do think there's far too much – I mean I'm not a great feminist as such. I am a great believer in everybody speaking their mind. And women should have just as much right to speak their mind and have good jobs and whatever else, but I don't like this idea in Parliament of them saying you must have 50 per cent women or whatever. I don't agree. I don't agree with it. I think the best person for the job, or the best person for whatever it is should be chosen. Not because they're black, white, a woman or whatever. Everybody should have a similar choice – an opportunity, let's say. The opportunity should be there, but there shouldn't be a special case.

Hazel: Yes. Do you think maybe in that case if things are specially for women they're maybe a bit patronising?

Enid: Yes. And something that has cropped up over the past years that I really hate are these groups of women and they go out together and their reactions to things are over the top. And they're just trying to make themselves seen and heard, and it's the wrong type of woman I think that is...is heard more often. And is more vocal, and um...I don't particularly like groups of women. Socially.

Hazel: So you're talking about social groups? Are you thinking about hen parties and things like that?

Enid: Can't stand it.

The types of programming that Enid identifies as "for women" are notably from her contemporary viewing, rather than the historical viewing that we have been discussing in the large portion of the interview which preceded this question. This is further grist to her mill in terms of modern television's mediocrity compared to television in her day. Enid also moves from disparaging television that she sees as "made for women" to disparaging contemporary groups of women in the real world, her comments serving as an example of her sense of dislocation in the modern world (Marias, 1970). This is not her generation's time.

Although nostalgia in the interviews often lead age to be worn as value, not all past viewing was related in positive terms. Denigration of past viewing, too, was commonplace as the women demonstrated their own movement through and with capital, accruing and wearing knowledge, which has led them to their current position which must necessarily be superior to the one they inhabited when younger. The most notable example was viewing of soap operas which, as I mentioned before, many women worked hard to depict as low status programming they had watched in the past but had since given up. As such, we can see not only a rejection of previous class positions, as illustrated by Belinda, Dawn and Enid's interviews, but generational positions too.

### *Conclusion*

Theorisation around the formation of and cultural significance of tastes has traditionally concentrated upon questions of class and power and the ways that aesthetic taste and the presentation of such serves to distinguish individuals from lower status groups. (Bourdieu, 1984). The class dimension of taste is certainly at play in the histories gathered here. The particular effort put in to establishing taste and value by my older working class women such as Enid and Belinda demonstrates the class dimension and

recourse to middleclass values. Middle class women did not feel the need to position their classed subjectivities in this way. This largely falls into line with previous scholarship which indicates how class and taste collide. However, my data shows how different expectations of what “quality” television is, or how interaction with quality denotes ones’ own distinction differs across generations, with expectations of what constitutes legitimate taste shifting considerably across historical periods. The younger, working class Dawn did not feel a need to present herself in the same way. Dawn instead demonstrated her distinction through a reflexive approach to the contexts of her viewing and the significance of media to her identity, as outlined in Chapter Four, rather than through a depiction of traditionally considered “legitimate” tastes.

In terms of specific textual tastes, Dawn, in fact, presented herself as a cultural omnivore. This is a new type of taste dimension whereby low status tastes can rub alongside more legitimate, “highbrow” cultural choices. The important question is, who can present themselves as an omnivore? The significant answer is that it is those who have the particular knowledges around owning low cultures. This is, in fact, a new presentation of middle class taste (Warde et al, 2008). Dawn’s adoption of it, seen against the older working class women’s recourse to traditional middle class tastes, demonstrates how class identification through taste alters across time.

More recently, the significance of gender to questions of taste and judgement have been considered (Skeggs, Thumim, Wood, 2008; Skeggs and Wood, 2011). In the hierarchies created by older women what was at the bottom was always feminine. They worked to distance themselves from the medium and, more particularly, from ideas of “television for women” which they persistently identified as low status and, on some occasions, patronising. While the experience of being a woman may not have altered much in the forty year period of study, as discussed in Chapter Four, the way we become women with specific class positions is nonetheless generationally influenced. The data presented in the chapter shows how class, gender and generation intersect around the medium of television to create particular taste readings. The periodisation of quality means that it is no longer enough to only consider taste as a product of class and gender position. Generational position, and the subject’s period of socialisation, is key to how these class and gender positions are formed.

## CHAPTER SIX

### MEMORY, NARRATIVE, NOSTALGIA

#### *Introduction*

In the previous chapter I discussed the many and varied ways that discourses around taste, distinction and judgement permeated the interviews. In this chapter I turn my attention to the women's life stories, and the how the production of memory which underpins those memories produces particular positions of value and judgement. I will particularly attend to the subject position which many of the women chose to place as their central object of value through which they judged themselves and others; their role as mothers and the place that this offered them within the family. This position became the framework through which the majority of the women I spoke to chose to narrate their lives.

Kathryn Woodward notes that despite the on-going negotiations and renegotiations of the cultural representations of and meanings made around motherhood, the position has not historically been given cultural expression, more often being subsumed into the broader 'family' (Woodward, 1997). The television viewing narratives of the women I interviewed are notable in the way many of the women place themselves within the wider idea of "family", where their roles as "child" have been significant, but their role as "mother" has been central. Life course perspectives, popularly used in Sociology but less evident in Television Studies, view the family as pivotal to socialisation, acting as the intermediary between the individual and a wider cultural context across the life course (Baltes, 1987). It is also the prime site for reproduction of traditional gender roles and norms and for the rhythms of everyday life (Felski, 1999). In this chapter I will attend to the ways that the women fit motherhood into the family context which has so often subsumed it, paying particular attention to how memories of the cycle of watching with mother and watching as mother indicate women's gendered relationship to their pasts and the shifting nature of woman's role within the family over time.

There is something very particular about the way the women weave narratives of television so closely together with their narratives of motherhood and family which speaks strongly of women's domestic emotional labour. The way they talk about it not only reflects their commitment to the domestic and their emotional investment within it,



but is also a further aspect to this labour in their role as 'kin-keepers' (Oliveri and Reiss, 1987).

### *The Production of Memory*

As early as the 1930s the idea of memory as a straightforward tool of retrieval was challenged and reconfigured by Frederic Bartlett (Bartlett, 1932). Following memory scholarship has theorised memory variously as performance, constructive, processual, partial and unreliable. The ways that individuals remember events and experiences as a broader and public collective memory (Hawlbachs, 1950) is less important to my data than the narrower idea of a private and familial "collective" memory. Collective memory refers to the shared pool of information held in the memories of two or more members of a group. Collective memory can be shared, passed on and constructed by groups, which can be either small, such as a British family, or large, such as British culture more generally. Individuals are born into a familial discourse which provides a backdrop of communal memories against which individual memories can be shaped. This collective, communal memory becomes the common knowledge of a social group, including families, which forges a sense of belonging and both group and individual identities.

As a concept, cultural memory is a further evolution of collective memory, introduced by Jan Assmann (Assman, 2011), who drew further upon Maurice Halbwachs's theory of collective memory. Memory is not just an individual, private experience but is also part of the collective domain. Historiographical and cultural studies work emphasize different aspects of cultural memory. Historiographical work has attended to cultural memory's process (Nora, 1989; Terdiman, 1993), while the cultural studies tradition has paid greater attention to its implications and objects. Memory is a phenomenon directly related to the present; our perception of the past is always influenced by the present, which means that the formation of memory is a process which is ever changing. Experience, whether it be lived or imagined, relates mutually to culture and memory. It is influenced by both factors, but also determines these at the same time (Haug, 1992; Neil Gregor, 2000). Memory's influence is made obvious in the way the past is experienced in present conditions for it can never be eliminated from human practice (Connerton, 1989). Experience, therefore, is substantial to the interpretation of culture as well as memory, and vice versa.

Memory work involves a set of complex cultural processes which produce identities, Jackie Stacey's "negotiation of 'public' discourses and 'private' narratives" (1994:63). As indicated in my methodology chapter the recounting of memories is not a straightforward representation of events, but a specifically crafted narrative or life story. Empirical memory work has been heavily invested in the testimonies of Holocaust survivors or similarly traumatic historical events that are rendered more memorable by their extraordinary nature. Amy Holdsworth's recent work on television as an institution of memory has challenged some of the existing assumptions about television and memory from a textual position (Holdsworth, 2011). My interview data indicates that although it often can be difficult to remember specifics of television, the medium has become so interwoven with daily life that memories of programmes and viewing circumstances are deeply embedded, and that audiences take pleasure in their recollection.

### *Television: The Struggle to Remember*

Work that engages with memories of a more everyday and mundane nature, particularly in reception studies, is less common. Much of the scholarship on memory work as carried out with and through television is typically limited by those same factors as limit much previous television reception work more generally. They proceed with a specific focus on one genre, as with, for example, John E Newhagen and Byron Reeves' work on memory and negative news images (Newhagen and Reeves, 1992) or Esther Thorson and Marian Friestad's work on emotion and episodic memory for television commercials (Page, Thorson and Friestad, 1989). Where such studies deviate from a concentration on specific programmes or genres and move into contextual memories they have tended to concentrate on one moment on time, which is frequently around the first acquisition of the earliest televisions (O'Sullivan, 1991; Penati, 2013).

Two pieces of research have disrupted this more limited pattern. Jerome Bourdon's interviews with participants in France in 1993 (Bourdon, 2003), and Emily Keightley's work on the "Media and Remembering" project (Keightley, 2011) both deal explicitly with the relationship between media and remembering practices beyond one specific moment. For Bourdon, the relationship between memory and television has been unsatisfactorily conceptualised through two contradictory commentaries whereby it is either demonised as destructive, in that it promotes forgetting, or championed as hyper-integrative, a major instrument in shaping global and national collective memory.

Bourdon instead proposes a broader typology of four different models of television's influence upon memory, which is inscribed through interactions with the *world* of television rather than specific programmes. "Wallpapers" are memories of habits and routines, while the three remaining categories are about specific, discrete events. "Media events" and "flashbulbs" are related to memories viewing texts and concern the specific genre of news or current affairs. The fourth category, which Bourdon labels "close encounters", consists of memories of events not directly related to viewing, but instead concerning "real life" interactions between viewers and television personalities. Bourdon's typology preferences "big" moments of viewing, which I will address shortly, over the "wallpaper" memories which deal with the more humdrum, everyday domestic context. While recognising that they form the backdrop to television viewing, Bourdon also dismisses these memories as "less loaded with emotion than the other, event-related kind of memories" which makes them more difficult to access without the aid of visual stimuli such as listings magazines (Bourdon, 2003:13). Certainly, Bourdon's typologies of memory are reproduced to some extent within my interview data, but the definitions that he draws greatly underestimate the gendered nuances of such memory work and the importance of "wallpaper" to women's lives.

Emily Keightley's work is one of the few examples of empirical work that deals explicitly with the relationship between media and remembering practices, and she notes that the ways in which televisual texts become involved in the lived process of remembering, require further elaboration (Keightley, 2011:396). Her interviews with white British women drawn from the wider project, which also included interviews with individual male participants and family groups, demonstrate how women's personal identities are shaped through practices of remembering using televisual resources. She illustrates the ways that women performed their gendered relationships to the past through their concentration on fashion, the social uses of television and their marital status. In this way, Keightley shows how "television content and use is used to mark common cultural knowledge and, as such, is actively deployed to articulate and re-establish commonality...women's agency signals the gendered nature of their emotional labour in everyday remembering and the key role that televisual texts can play in its performance." (*Ibid*: 407) Keightley's vision for how gender shapes what is remembered and how remembering is enacted, "acting simultaneously on past and present" (*Ibid*: 398) is evident in my own research. While Keightley invites women to draw comparisons between "then" and "now", there is not a sustained movement of memory work through life course in her work as there is in mine, and her work focuses

on a broad spectrum of programmes which the women chose to narrate their identities. Instead of performing their gendered identities through programme specifics and marital status, the women I spoke to performed this gendered relationship to the past by locating themselves firmly in familial and domestic contexts during both childhood and motherhood. My interviews are notable for their concentration on these two life stages, which were the life stages that most women were most able to narrate. Memories of teenage television viewing, aside from popular music programmes, were more difficult for the women to articulate. Such narratives indicate that there might be life stages or periods when we are more tied to and involved with the domestic (Collie, 2013).

During the interviews many of the women drew attention to the difficulties of memory work and the production of life narratives more generally, with the ephemeral nature of memory proving to be a particular frustration to many. The effort involved in retrieving memories was clear, and particularly well exemplified by Sue O:

“Oh...god, my brain. It's driving me mad because things keep flashing in and out. Once the memories start flowing. No, it's gone... Maybe it'll come back. Just on the edge of my mind and I find that more annoying 'cos I know it's just there and I can't access it. Never mind, there will be other things.”

Sue O (64)

The struggle to remember television more particularly was also evident, as in Belinda's suggestion that “I couldn't remember anything very specific about television I've watched, you know, so you'll have to prompt me on that one”. The interviews were littered with errors regarding dates, programme titles and programme personnel and women seeking confirmation or otherwise of statements. Despite the inherent difficulties in recalling an activity so firmly rooted in the everyday as television, the richness of the conversations indicates that the women were able to remember viewing their interactions with the medium if not always the programmes themselves. It might be difficult to carry out memory work of this kind, but as I will demonstrate over the remainder of this chapter, television, and particularly commonplace, everyday programming, is remembered in a very particular, and gendered, way.

### *Talking About Everyday Television*

In conceptualising television as “the annihilation of memory, and consequently of history in its continual stress upon the ‘newness’ of its own discourse” (Doane, 1990:227), Mary Ann Doane invokes a situation in which only the catastrophic moments, those moments which “can be isolated from the fragmented flow of information” (*ibid.*: 227) and *not* those moments of a more quotidian nature, can be remembered. Amy Holdsworth has taken issue with this theorisation, pointing to how the privileging of this type of traumatic media moment in a televisual sense is a replication of the dominant modes of memory discourse more generally (Holdsworth, 2010, 2011). She also proposes that the domination of Raymond Williams’s concept of “flow” in models of television textuality have allowed television to be characterised as “inducing a wider vacuum within cultural memory resulting in historical amnesia.” (2010:130). Her dismantling of the notion of television as amnesiac, or as a force for undermining memory, from a textual position examines television as memory text and memorialised television moments through a focus on the everyday rather than the extraordinary with the use of examples of popular programming such as *ER*, *Grey’s Anatomy* and *The Wire*. Holdsworth suggests that by reflecting on patterns and similarities between the textualities of memory and television, we can capture a sense of the experience of watching and remembering television.

This re-thinking of television memory proceeds from a position whereby television is “memory text”. For Holdsworth, such memory texts invite empathy and identification, drawing upon our familiarity with the experience of memory. When considered in conjunction with Annette Kuhn’s work on family photograph albums (Kuhn, 2010), Holdsworth makes an intriguing case for the idea of everyday television as memory text not only when created as such by broadcasters, but also as individual programmes used in memory work. My research is more concerned with this memory work as carried out with television. Within the memory work that my interviews invoked, talk around those “big” moments identified by Doane were rare, with more women talking about the kind of everyday television that inhabits the flow as discussed by Holdsworth. More usually, however, the women eschewed remembering television programmes for remembering their lives and, particularly, their lives as part of a family unit which played out day to day around television. Where televisual memory texts did arise, they were frequently triggered by previously contextualised biographical memories. I realised that often where they did occur, the women used their discussion to talk about viewing circumstances and familial relationships. This was a theme that was constant throughout their talk around all programming. References to moments which punctured

the flow were rare actually in the interviews, contrary to Doane's expectations. In fact, everyday, often "low status" entertainment programming, and how they watched it in a routine, domestic context was a more dominant participant in the women's remembrance of television.

The women's memories of television viewed and viewing practices within the domestic context were bound together tightly, redolent of Tim O'Sullivan's reflection that "other memories frequently fuse television programmes and experiences to the rites of passage of domestic biography, serving as markers for remembered people and situation, of changing relations of kinship, lifestyle and shared experience" (O'Sullivan, 1997:163). Television is grounded in these women's lives, and it is interesting to see how many of the women worked to remember specific dates by anchoring events in their personal recollections as exemplified here by Enid as she tries to remember precisely when her family got their first television:

"Um...ooh no, wait a minute, it would be before then...no actually, yes. 'Cos if I was married – I can never remember really. It was about 1958, 59 when I was married and I had my daughter the first year and then my son two years after that. So it would be very early Sixties."

Enid (82)

Traditionally viewed as both a domesticised and feminised medium, my interviews demonstrate that television has become such an integral part of the everyday that it is precisely through other everyday activities such as relationships with family and friends and domestic routine that the programmes which were watched are recalled and the reasons for their significance in the women's lives emerge.

Often, the women's talk about programmes was quite cursory, more a simple mention that they had watched it, without a biographical hook which would begin to fill out the details of their personal reflections. The final section of the interview, where I provided lists of programmes that were intended to act as stimulus to memory, was the least successful part of the interview. With a prescribed list of titles to read through, most of the women resorted to responding with comments such as "Yes, I remember that" or "No, don't remember that", with little detail around the programmes, suggesting that the women were less interested in talking about programmes which did not also stimulate biographical memories. Further, it is indicative of the way that discussion of television programmes came out of personal memories, rather than vice versa. The women that I spoke to, it seems, often remember television, and programmes through

a narrative of family viewing, nurture, happy and comforting recollections. There is a similar theme of gendered remembering at play here to the one that Emily Keightley demonstrates in her audience work. Instead of enacting this memory through programming specifics, as Keightley's interviewees did, my own interviewees have stitched the medium into their daily lives.

### *Nostalgia:*

The theme of nostalgia will be unpacked more thoroughly in relation to my interview data across the remainder of this chapter and, indeed, has already formed part of previous chapters in passing. At this stage, however, it seems relevant to pin down exactly what I understand of nostalgia.

The sense of "nostalgia" that emerges most prominently in scholarship on the subject is melancholy in tone. In her exploration of the spaces of collective nostalgia that connect national biography and personal self-fashioning in the twenty-first century, *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym points to the roots of the word "nostalgia". She notes that it is an amalgamation of the Greek words *nostos* (a return home) and *algia*, which usually indicates pain, but can also mean "longing". In essence, then, nostalgia is a form of homesickness for a time and place that has passed. Boym draws attention to the different forms of nostalgia that individuals and communities invoke, that "restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past, while reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history in the dreams of another place and time" (Boym, 2001:41). Steve Allen also points to nostalgia's role as "grieving remembrance", a means of alleviating the pain of loss (Allen, 2010).

Maleuvre describes how the home is transformed from "simply a house" into "an image of how we dwell, how we inhabit the world, how we view ourselves in that world" (Maleuvre, 1999:120). The nostalgia enacted through television within the oral histories that I have collected is distinctly reflective in Boym's terms, and is directly related to both the generational and life stage positions that the women inhabit. However, much of it is also about women's positions in the home. The themes of nostalgia are interestingly grouped by generation, relating to different phases of the life course depending upon what it is that the women might yearn for. The youngest women's nostalgia was directed towards memories of programme specifics of their childhood viewing and watching with siblings and parents, a time when they did not inhabit the role of woman with domestic responsibility. Conversely, the women in their 60s and

70s, such as Jane, Lynda and Hilary H, were most likely to become nostalgic for their memories of watching with children, actively reflecting upon and, indeed grieving for, that period when they had been particularly tied to their role as mother. The oldest women were, if anything, nostalgic for a period before television, narrating their social lives outside the home during the war as Molly, Betty and Joan all did..

### *Family Viewing*

Family viewing here was paramount, and it is the memories of the type of mainstream, family programming which dominates the women's memory work suggesting that the context of such viewing is more easily recalled than what was viewed. While the "A History of Television for Women in Britain, 1947-1989" project anticipated a great deal more interview data relating to programmes with a very specific feminine address, such as *Butterflies*, *Bouquet of Barbed Wire*, *The Cypress Tree* and *Rock Follies*, the programmes which did in fact emerge from the interviews had, if anything, a family address and included the *Morecambe and Wise* Christmas specials, *Sunday Night at the London Palladium*, quiz shows such as *Countdown* and soap operas such as *Coronation Street*.

Early work which contextualised the viewing experience (Morley, 1986; Lull, 1980) strongly indicated that for many viewers what is watched in the family home is not necessarily a matter of personal choice but a series of compromises borne out of keeping the peace within a family or social unit that makes those choices. Family, as I mentioned earlier, is the site where individual identity development occurs (Baltes, 1987), but family stories are also the way that individuals connect across generations to create a sense of family history and identity (Martin, Hagestad and Diedrick, 1988). Research on West German families and their media use (Rogge, Jensen and Lull, 1988; Rogge, 1991) found that everyday family life is built upon a daily and weekly schedule that incorporates routine and change. Rogge identifies two levels of reality, an 'objective media reality, i.e. the significance the media have in everyday family life', and 'subjective media reality, i.e. the fact that families structure their everyday lives on the basis of greatly varying ideas' (1991: 178). This research shows that media activities are part of a family routine, and that this can help us to understand people's lifestyle choices, while also understanding that different family members perceive that routine differently. According to Rogge, the way that the media can be part of family routine 'defines interpersonal relationships and the emotional and communicative climate in a family' (1991: 179), a conclusion which chimes rather nicely with Don P



McAdams suggestion that, '[e]very family develops within a complex and dynamic ecology of narrative' (McAdams, 2004:235) in his discussion of the significance of the family group across life course.

What "family" means to an individual, and how an individual fits into their family, alter as that individual moves through the life course. As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, the narration of this 'family' viewing fell broadly into two life stages. Erik Erikson's stages of social development provide a framework for the periods of school age childhood and middle adulthood were the two that the women were most eager to relate. Erikson sees each phase of psycho-social development as characterised by a conflict, of which the outcomes success or failure will determine future life course and choices. For School Age Childhood, this conflict is between industry and inferiority when children begin to experience new social and academic demands. Success leads to a sense of competence, while failure results in feelings of inferiority. For Middle Adulthood, the conflict takes place between generativity and stagnation. That is, adults need to create or nurture things that will outlast them, often by having children or creating a positive change that benefits other people. Success leads to feelings of usefulness and accomplishment, while failure results in shallow involvement in the world (Erikson, 1959).

The life stages that Erikson terms Adolescence (identity versus role confusion) and Early Adulthood (intimacy versus isolation) were characterised by a marked absence of television and domestic memories, with many women noting that during this period they were busy with homework, careers, household chores and social lives. Clearly, there are periods of life where television can become more or less significant, which is an aspect of television viewing which has not been considered in any depth before now. The life stage method I have employed has allowed these stages to become visible.

#### *Family Viewing as a Child*

Perhaps the most popular part of the interview for women in their 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s, and certainly the aspect of lifetime viewing that women found easiest to identify and narrate, was the first question about life stage which asked the participants to focus on their first memories of television. For the women in these age groups, this necessitated discussion of childhood viewing that they remembered and had enjoyed. In the responses I received to my call to interview this was also the aspect of viewing

that most women wanted to talk about. The conversation would take a nostalgic turn when first discussing the most obvious programming from childhood, so for example, for women in their sixties this referred to those within the *Watch with Mother* (BBC, 1952-1973) time-slot. This was one of the few occasions when the women would simply state the name of a programme, and then smile as if there was little else to say, while also enquiring as to whether I had ever heard of these programmes. They often seemed surprised that I was aware of programmes like *Ragtag and Bobtail* (BBC, 1953-1965), *Andy Pandy* (1950-1952), *Muffin the Mule* (BBC, 1946-1952) or *The Flowerpot Men* (BBC, 1952), even though these programmes have been well represented in more modern popular culture. There is a strong sense of nostalgia around these memories. Television serves to create such communities of nostalgia, these are our cultural touchstones when we meet with old friends and family but a wider nostalgia for television exists online<sup>7</sup> and on television itself (Holdsworth, 2011). However, once these initial reminiscences were made the women would begin to consider television's role within their family life, particularly how the medium fitted into family routine and its organisation. As previously mentioned in Chapter Four, when Marilyn talked about her engagement with *Sunday Night at the London Palladium* (ATV, 1955-1967) it happened as a result of a specific family memory. This memory then led into a detailed account of her family's viewing of the programme, which happened each week. Her narrative about watching the programme expanded so far as to include her dad making toffee on a Sunday so that each member of the family could have two squares in a handkerchief to eat while they watched which they each washed down with a glass of shandy. Other similar examples of the importance of familial relationships in remembering television programmes extended to disagreement between siblings and parents about when and what to watch, family traditions while viewing, paternal control of the technology, using television programmes as a basis for childhood play and being treated to grown up viewing with their mothers.

For example, Fiona's childhood narrative was largely bound up in her father's control of the technology and family as a whole. Male domination of viewing and recording technology has been a common finding in empirical audience studies which have used the home and family as a category for analysis. David Morley drew attention to

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<sup>7</sup> Websites such as the TV Cream website ([www.tvcream.co.uk](http://www.tvcream.co.uk)), which curates television classic moments and associated trivia from British, American and Australian broadcasting, or Whirligig ([www.whirligig-tv.org.uk](http://www.whirligig-tv.org.uk)) which showcases British television and radio from the 1950s. Forum sites where fans can communicate with each other, such as the TV Heaven forum [tvhforum.proboards.com](http://tvhforum.proboards.com)

masculine 'symbolic control' of the remote (1986) and Ann Gray, too, found that while not displaying interest in other household technology of labour such as the washing machine, that men dominated the VCR (1992). Fiona's father had strict rules about when the television could be watched and punishment for transgressing his rules was strict. Her first memory of television encapsulates both her relationship with her father and his relationship with the technology, of which he immediately set himself up as both expert and owner;

Fiona: ...the television was in the good room, the lounge. And it was locked. Um...my father and mother would turn the lights off and close the curtains so it was like you were watching at the pictures. You know, the cinema?

Hazel: Yes

Fiona: It had to be in the dark. And the television was a beautiful piece of furniture in a cabinet. And my father always used to say 'Now don't anybody touch the back of the television because you might damage it and the tube is very expensive'. I always remember that. 'The tube is very expensive'.

Fiona (64)

Most of the childhood memories of watching television with a parent related to 'watching with mother', although in most cases this did not actually refer to television programmes that fell into the traditional Watch with Mother' tradition. That is, women did not speak about the watching programmes such as *Andy Pandy*, *Muffin the Mule* or *Pipkins* (ATV, 1973-1981) with their mother. Those programmes were more typically recalled in relation to siblings or to viewing alone. The types of programmes which were recalled in this way were programmes which addressed an older audience, and they were remembered fondly because their mother had recognised them as being grown up enough to join her in her own viewing. Sue E, for example, recalled being allowed to stay up to watch *Emergency Ward Ten* (ITV, 1957-1967), cuddled into her mother which made her feel very grown up at the time, while Penny had very fond memories of watching *The Forsyte Saga* (BBC2, 1967) with her own mother as a twelve year old. However, not all such memories involved the maternal parent. Here Jane recalls a particularly touching family tradition with her father;

Hazel: And when you watched it did you sit and watch it in silence or would you discuss what was happening as it was going on?

Jane: In silence mainly. Though when *Bonanza* came on my father and I used to do this [mimes horse riding] because they were riding across the plain you see [HC laughs] so my father and I would do that. Ride to meet them [laughs].

Hazel: So that was a family tradition?

Jane: Yes. A family joke. A little family joke.

There is a quality about these reminiscences that indicates television's role as a medium of intimacy. Its situation in the domestic makes it party to these moments of familial intimacy which can prompt memories of tender moments of reaching out to family members.

Its intimate role is further suggested in my interviews with women who were in some way 'lonely' as children within their home. This group was small within my sample and comprised Jenny, Tracey, Patricia and Jane. Jenny and Jane were only children, Tracey had siblings who were much older than she was and were uninterested in her, while Patricia had been her mother's only child but found herself as part of a larger sibling group which she always felt excluded from when her mother re-married. Patricia's interview took a rather reflective turn towards the end, and she began to talk about the importance of television to her childhood;

'But I wasn't - I mean, every child thinks everything's unfair to them. But I wasn't unfairly treated. He did his best. I was a different child. I was not like the others. I mean, they thought I was crackers for enjoying the Brain programme [*The Brains Trust*] and things like that. I mean sometimes they'd come in and watch them if that was all there was. *The Brains Trust* thing on a Sunday afternoon. I'm sure it was a Sunday. And I'd be going "Oh, so he said this" and they'd all be going "what?" But there you are. That's why they're millionaires and I'm not. I mean it. We're all very different. I just saw life very differently.'

Patricia

Her recollection that her half-brothers would watch the programme with her sometimes begins to illuminate her time spent in front of the television alone, but also the intellectual stimulation which certain programmes offered her, promising a wider community that she felt included in and part of. Each of these women identified the comforting aspect of television to them as children, whereby it might act as company, as a link to other children or even both. Those women who were children or younger teenagers during their first experiences of television were firmly locating this experience within a family context.

### *Family Viewing as Mother*

Motherhood was central to many women's narratives, and was an important theme in all but two of the women's memories of television viewing. Sue E and Sue O were the

only women in my sample who were not mothers and, unsurprisingly, their memories of adult viewing are quite different to the narratives of the women who are mothers. As I have explained before, Sue E had quite a different relationship with television, having worked in the industry for much of her adult life. Her adult narrative was unusual in the sample for its concentration upon herself and her own viewing. The strong relational focus of viewing memories extended significantly into Sue O's memories, however, even without the narratives around motherhood. Until recently she lived with her elderly mother, and much of her conversation around adult viewing related to what they watched together:

Hazel: Okay, so as an adult how did you structure television into your day? What was it that determined how and when you watched television?

Sue O: Well, it would mostly be the evenings on weekdays, when I got back from work. Oh god, *Neighbours*. I started to watch that, I can't remember, late Eighties or something like that. It would start just when I got in from work. Cos I worked locally, near enough to walk there and back. So I'd get in and it would start almost at once. And I still watch it. Um...so yes, I'd come in and watch *Neighbours*. And then it would be supper time. My mum was living here then, and we used to, you know, live in this house together. And we'd watch *Neighbours* and then have our meal. Then we'd wash up and settle down to our viewing. So mostly it'd be the evenings. Certainly during the week.

Hazel: Yeah.

Sue O: But at weekends...there'd sometimes be a nice film on in the afternoon maybe. And that would certainly be the case when we were together – when more of the family were living together. There'd be nice films on. Especially on Sundays in the afternoon. Weepies, or comedies. Um...and if it was not a nice day, didn't fancy going anywhere then sitting down and watching a film as a family. That was nice.

There was a cyclical nature to this theme in many of the other women's histories, with accounts of watching with their own mothers, statements about the "dropping away" of television during the teenage years and then reminiscences of watching with their own children. The depiction of the experience of motherhood by the women I interviewed across all generations is one which is typically quite limited, idealised and fulfilling. Children were rarely discussed in terms of compromise, logistical planning or increased workload either by women who worked outside the home or those who did not.

Domestic routine and television's role not only in terms of fitting into that routine, but actually framing it and creating it (Scannell, 1986; Silverstone, 1994) was a common theme of conversation by the women, particularly when talking about experiences of

motherhood. Interestingly, most women avoided talking about their viewing patterns in terms of being a “distracted consumer” (Morley, 1986). When I asked whether they did other tasks while watching television most of the women emphasised that when they watched television they gave their full attention to it, counter to assumptions about the ‘glance’ of viewing television versus the ‘gaze’ of the cinematic experience (Ellis, 1982). However, at other points in the interview it would emerge that there were programmes that they maybe preferred to do the ironing in front of, fold clothes, dust and tidy. This feeds into discourses around women’s invisible work (Daniels, 1987; Thomson, 1991), the home as a site of leisure for men, yet an additional site of labour for women and the “leisure gap” (Hochschild and Machung, 1989; Seiter, 1999). Even when carrying out an activity that is, for other family members, a leisure activity women use the time to carry out tasks, but the labour is invisible to such an extent that even they do not recognise that they are doing it.

While many of the women, particularly those in their sixties and older, mentioned in passing their use of the radio as an aide to completing and structuring “boring” household chores such as cleaning and cooking, television was more likely to appear as a way to structure time spent with children which, although falling within the realm of women’s invisible labour within the home, many of the interviewees enjoyed. Here Jenny lays out her daily routine with her daughter which is structured around the broadcast time of *Sesame Street* (ITV, 1971-1982; C4, 1987-2001). Notably, it is not only the broadcast itself which is a staple of their day, but also the on-going conversation that they carry out after the viewing event;

“I remember when [my daughter] was little we used to have our – that was the time of day when we’d have our - it sounds awful really, but sometimes we’d have our meal in front of *Sesame Street*, ‘cos that’s when she would have her meal and then have a snack in the evening. So we’d watch *Sesame Street* and then go out for a walk, go to the park in the afternoon. But we’d sort of talk about things that had been going on, and she loved the dog that used to count. There was an Alsatian that used to count the numbers and things. The lovely characters in it were just fabulous really.”

Jenny

Generally, too, women spoke about ceding control of television viewing to their young children in positive terms. They do not appear, on the whole, to have resented watching children’s choices of viewing rather than their own, and their talk around the children’s viewing watched as mothers is typically carried out with fondness. In her work on dedicated cinema screenings for parents, who were predominantly mothers,

and their babies, Karen Boyle draws attention to the intimate aspect of the showings. The pretext of watching the film with their babies also offered women the opportunity to create a dedicated block of time to spend with their child (Boyle, 2010). The historical periodisation of my research potentially offered the same thing to women within the home. The period 1947-1989 is one which pre-dates dedicated children's channels such as CBBC, CBeebies or CITV. Programming which catered for children was screened at very specific times over this period, in the post-school and tea-timeslot. As such, the television schedule of the time actually created a very specific space and time for togetherness. Lynn Spigel draws attention to the original marketing of television as a source of family togetherness in an austere and disrupted time (Spigel, 1992). This image is one which the women I interviewed are keen to narrate as continuing to occur beyond the 1950s and well into the 1980s.

Parent-child leisure time has changed considerably since the period I have asked the women about, with the relationship developing an increasing 'curricularization' (Buckingham and Scanlon, 2003:6) as all such leisure time increasingly has to conform to 'worthwhile' and enriching pursuits. Matt Briggs notes that 'these practices are subject to complex forms of social regulation where what is means to play with your child, and how you let them watch television, is subject to a continual discursive scrutiny' (2006:446). In her research into mother and child cinema screenings, Karen Boyle noted that for many of the women she interviewed the act of sitting and watching offered them a space to simply be with their child away from the other burdens of life as a parent (Boyle, 2010). To some extent, what the narratives I have gathered offer is a nostalgic recollection of motherhood past rather than a sharing of burdens of motherhood as lived. When the women in my study think of what was important about their past viewing, it is these moments of shared time and shared cultural expressions in the domestic sphere which emerge. Particular types of body language were employed to describe their children's favourite programmes as were used when talking about their own childhood viewing. Many women would clasp their hands together and move back into the comfort of their seat, other would fold their arms around their bodies in an embrace. Programme titles were sometimes named without further discussion, but accompanied with softened facial expressions, and the speed of the narrative slowed, as the women lingered over the memories. The naming of the title was enough, with very little expansion of detail about the programmes. Here, for example, Lynda and I discuss her son's childhood viewing;

Hazel: So, um...where am I? When you had children did the way you watched television change?

Lynda: Well I probably watched more because I stayed at home. I gave up work and stayed at home. I actually never went back to work [laughs] so...the plan was, but it didn't happen. But it probably did, yeah. I got very fond of *Masters of the Universe*. Oh, I tell you who started it – *Postman Pat*.

Hazel: Postman Pat?

Lynda: Oh yes.

Hazel: So do you have – you have some fondness for the children's programmes you used to watch?

Lynda: In the eighties, yeah. They were fun. Pat and his black and white cat. Is he still going?

Hazel: Yeah

Lynda: Oh, and *Thomas the Tank Engine*. He still going?

Hazel: Yeah.

Lynda: And *Masters of the Universe* we used to watch.

Hazel: My brother was a huge fan of *Masters of the Universe*.

Lynda: Oh yeah. *Skeletor*. We had all the plastic figures.

Or Jane's very definite assertion, "I loved them. Absolutely. *SuperTed*. And *Dangermouse*...oh, *Dangermouse*". As with their memories of their own childhood viewing, it is the experience of watching that is recalled and presented during the interviews rather than specifics of the programmes themselves. Jane clearly reverts to the staple of relating children's programmes by simply stating the programme title with affection, and Lynda is more interested in knowing if the programmes have stood the test of time than in discussing specific memories of those programmes.

None of the women I spoke to expressed anxiety about their own children's level of viewing, but many did express anxiety about modern children's interaction with television, as with Belinda's, "I mean, now...I'd hate to be you today. I really would. Cos you never know what's going to pop up at any time".

### *Discord and Strife*

This fondness contrasts starkly with some of the women's feelings about their husband's assertion of his own viewing tastes which was often viewed negatively and emerged as a cause of domestic strife. Lynda and her husband, for example, had set



up separate television rooms so that she did not have to watch 'wall to wall' sport and to avoid the seething resentment her husband's sports programming caused her. More starkly, Jane segued from talking about her husband's stifling control of their television viewing into talking about their divorce;

Jane: I'm sorry there was a big gap in my viewing.

Hazel: Oh no, that's just as interesting to me. I'm interested =

Jane: = My husband had full control, you see. And I didn't see anything I wanted to see. Unless he was at work, 'cos I could watch then.

Hazel: Did you used to watch during the day? During that period?

Jane: Yes.

Hazel: What sorts of things did you watch then? Because it was different programmes on in during the day.

Jane: Oh yes, it was. Very much so. Um...a lot of the films. Afternoon films.

Hazel: Oh right.

Jane: But they had to be off when he came in...you can probably guess from all this that I'm divorced.

Hazel: I was going to say he sounds like hard work.

Jane: Yes, that's one way of putting it.

Hazel: Did you ever watch those programmes that were on during the day that were like *This Morning*? What was there? *Pebble Mill at One* and things like that?

Jane: No.

Hazel: Were you not interested in things like that?

Jane: No. I think because they were bitty.

Hazel: Oh, you don't like the way they're sectioned up? Yes, they don't flow very well do they? I can see from what you're saying...the films and the drama that it's actually the narrative that you enjoy.

Jane: Escapism. Yes. I think because I – I'm in the programme with them that's why I can't watch anything horrible.

Hazel: Do you? You really place yourself in them?

Jane: Oh yes [laughs] so I can't watch anything horrid cos I'd get too upset. So when I got divorced it was quite a treat to be able to watch what I wanted. A little treat.

Hazel: It must have been difficult for you to go from living by yourself, pleasing yourself and watching whatever you liked to going in to a, you know =

Jane: = A controlling marriage? Well, I had my son and he's absolutely wonderful. So I can't complain.

Even within the framework of talking about an unhappy marriage, the one bright spot for her is that she had her son and, once again, motherhood emerges as a major marker of value. For a variety of reasons, however, some of the women were in a position where their adult children were currently living with them, and their conversation around viewing with their children extended into the present and their children's' adulthood. Sometimes these viewing occasions were again described in terms of enjoyment and pleasure, but more usually their viewing relationships with an adult child were interrogated more critically. Here is another example from Jenny who previously spoke about the pleasure of structuring the viewing of *Sesame Street* into her days spent with her young daughter. Her daughter is now in her final year at university and spends extended periods of time at home during the holidays. Their viewing relationship has continued to be rich, with Jenny crediting her daughter with introducing her to new programmes which she has come to enjoy, but also revisiting their old viewing habits, "I'm quite – through my daughter I suppose I'm getting into American television more. Although I was watching *Friends* and *Frasier* when she was very little, and then she would start watching it with me." And yet there is also discord in this viewing relationship,

It's quite interesting in terms of my relationship with my daughter 'cos that's kind of an issue and she mostly wins...I sometimes find now I'm almost dreading when she comes – not dreading when she comes home. But I kind of know that early evening and sort of watching [interrupted here by waiter who wanted us to order food] Yeah, no. It's sometimes quite a sort of thing when she comes home, 'cos she loves *Hollyoaks* which I don't particularly go for at all.

Jenny (53)

Within the wider context of the following interview snippet, Molly talked a lot about the give and take in her viewing relationship with her daughter and also drew her grandson into the conversation, mentioning that he had tried to get her to watch the *Harry Potter* films, but that they were not her type of thing.

Molly: I sort of programme them first thing every morning. What I've been doing recently with *Emmerdale*, cos it's been cutting in every evening for half an hour and my daughter doesn't like it. She doesn't like *Emmerdale*, so what I do now is I it for the week. I think it's for the Saturday morning or the Sunday morning?

Hazel: Oh, is it an omnibus?

Molly: Yes, an omnibus, and you've got them all then.

These comments regarding the temporal transformation of the parent-child viewing relationship indicate how the reality and ideology of the home are not static but change over time as it constantly shaped and transformed by the conflicts and power struggles played out by the individuals within it (Felski, 1999-2000). The comments by Jenny and Molly, however, are also about life as it played out now and, as such, remain untinged by the nostalgia which characterises the women's conversation around their earlier maternal experiences.

Television has sometimes been likened to a "social cement" (Geraghty, 1981; Spigel, 1992). Lynn Spigel notes that in post-war America, descriptions of television suggested that it "would bring the family ever closer...it was seen as a kind of household cement that promised to reassemble the splintered lives of families that had been separated during the war" (Spigel, 1992:39) This type of restorative role is also apparent in Jan Uwe-Rogge's empirical study of familial relationships with each other through television, he analyses his subject Mrs Rees's use of the medium and concludes that "the television situation creates a bond between the children, induces an enforced intimacy and imposes a feeling of community with no words being spoken." (Uwe-Rogge, 1989:177). For Rogge the television in this scenario compensates for emotional defeats and acts as a substitute for real experience. Television can only be used to give *expression* to ideas of intimacy and closeness. Roger Silverstone develops this idea in his work on television and everyday life (Silverstone, 1994), where he argues from a philosophical standpoint that television acts to protect the individual, becoming an inseparable part of her at cognitive and emotional levels, and that television fills his time and space. From a universalist perspective, Silverstone presents television as a technology which offers ontological security, a process by which individuals are enabled to exist in society (Silverstone, 1993). This security is established through a sense of ontological security without real life experience, whereby television links us to the world and gives us a sense of "remote trust" to the truth that it represents. In addition Silverstone argues that television provides us with a transitional object which enables the individual to disengage from the mother and gain a sense of selfhood. Television fills the absence of the mother and the functions that she represents which construct ontological security such as continuity, indestructibility, the temporal rhythms of the everyday, as well as organising the domestic space with its central position in the household.

However, Uwe-Rogge and Silverstone's analyses fail to account for the specifics of the gendering of the type of emotional labour around motherhood and television that the women recount in their interviews with me. They fail to account for the women who have a close relationship with motherhood. Sara Ahmed suggests that "emotions are not something 'I' or 'we' have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surface or boundaries are made: the 'I' and the 'we' are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others" (Ahmed, 2004:10). The Women's memories gathered here are loaded with emotion, and for older women the nostalgia of that labour, of the wallpaper of everyday life is evident in their everyday television viewing. Television does enact an ontological security, but not always by acting as a substitute for a mother. The ontology is, in fact, gendered and television offers another tool by which mothers can enact their roles. There is a quality about these reminiscences that indicate the ways in which television can be perceived as medium of intimacy. Its situation within the domestic makes it pivotal to these moments of familial intimacy. This echoes Susan Geiger's suggestion that women's embeddedness in familial life may shape their view of the world and consciousness of historical time, and Emily Keightley's conclusion that, "Television content is used to mark common cultural knowledge and is actively deployed to articulate and re-establish commonality. In this process women's agency signals the gendered nature of their emotional labour in their everyday remembering and the key role that televisual texts can play in its performance".

Both Uwe-Rogge and Silverstone characterise television as filling a gap, and suggesting that this gap is caused by the absence of the mother. Yet the women talk more of television as a facilitator in their relationships with their children. In their memories, they are not absent from the viewing process, often using the opportunity to share with their children, to cuddle their children and to broach difficult subjects with their children. As Jenny (53) says;

"Like we quite often say that, um, that my husband is so much more fastidious than us. And we just laugh and say that, oh he's so Niles. You know, he kind of worries about things. And I just love the way Niles has to wipe the seat when he goes anywhere [HC: yeah] and sits down. And that kind of thing. So it was quite a good way of my daughter bonding with the man who became her step dad. And she could laugh and say 'that's just like you Phil. You do that' and it kind of allowed her to say something that would actually be quite tricky normally."

In Life Course work, there is disagreement around how far gender directs this type of memorialisation, how far men would also choose to narrate these aspects of their life course and how much significance they might imbue these memories with. Coleman et al (1990) show that in later life men and women are equally likely to use the family as the central continuity in their life course discussion. However, other research indicates that women are more likely to narrate family events than their male counterparts (Paletschek and Schraut, 2008). I cannot draw conclusions on this, as I have only gathered women's memories. What is particularly interesting about the histories that I have collected here is that I did not ask women to narrate family events. I asked them to tell me about their own television viewing. What they particularly wanted to talk about, however, was the viewing they carried out with others and the significance that they attach to the relational memories. I favour the image of women as 'kin-keepers' (Oliveri and Reiss, 1987) whereby it is women's labour and effort which keeps families together and in touch. Recounting their family stories to me is part of that labour, just as is their creation of the domestic space in which that family life is played out (Felski, 1999-2000).

Talk about motherhood was extended beyond television viewing, and was a central part of many of the interviews. This was a status that many of the women were proud of and viewed as an integral part of their identity. This may in some part be a result of my own status as a mother. Many of the women were very interested in the fact that I had children of my own and were keen to talk about my own maternal experiences. The interviews are full of references to my children, how generationally different my experience must be to their own and concern about the inappropriate television that children like mine "these days" are exposed to. In Ellen Seiter's interviews with women at her support group, her participants expressed concern about children watching television and about watching too much television generally (Seiter, 1999). That is not what comes across in most of my interviews. Again, this is suggestive of the differences in the nostalgia of motherhood recalled rather than the stresses of motherhood as lived. Seiter draws attention to the conversation around the shared burdens of household chores, young kids, the necessity of attending to their marital relationship and the leisure gap.

My encounter is different. I, the researcher, occupy a life stage where I still have these chores. With the exception of two of the women I interviewed, Dawn and Tracey who still had school aged children at home, these women do *not* experience these burdens

any more. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this is part of how nostalgia works in the older women's narratives. The place and time that the older women are homesick for is precisely that time that they were enacting this type of emotional labour with their children. If motherhood is a marker of value, when that time has passed how can we recapture that value if not through nostalgic remembrance?

### *Conclusion*

The viewing narratives of the British women gathered here are not significantly dominated by recollections of those moments which interrupt the flow, but rather by those programmes and viewing contexts which inhabited that flow. That is not to say that these 'big', disruptive moments have not been remembered, but that in their curation of memories to present in a specific interview the women I spoke to were preferencing more mundane, "wallpaper" recollections. This indicates how the female audience might use television as a memory text in a similar way to the photographs and family albums of Annette Kuhn's work on memory, to express and pick through 'interconnections at the level of remembrance between the private, the public and the personal' (Kuhn, 2010). For these women, their personal investments, the means by which they judged themselves and asked others to judge them related to their location within family. Generationally, the women's narratives across life course were remarkably similar, suggesting that a feminine gendered relationship to the past remains relatively constant, despite the dramatic social and domestic changes which occurred between 1947 and 1989. Television is widely understood to be a shared medium and a domestic medium and it is in this context that it continues to live in memory, particularly for women who have invested so much of themselves within that landscape.

Jérôme Bourdon's suggestion that the "taken for grantedness" of the domestic landscape renders those wallpaper memories as more dormant represents a gendered inflection. If it is a female's labour, physical and emotional, which has created the very character of that domestic landscape then it seems probable that there is nothing "taken for granted" at all about her relationship with it. Television has situated itself within the domestic sphere. The medium is part of the "wallpaper" of life and the memories which emerge from talking about television are tinged with a particular significance and emotion. Talk around television is never just about 'television'. It is, in fact, one of the ways we mediate identities and make sense of our personal world as well as the wider world.

The domestic arena represents another realm of work for women. The work the women narrate here, the work which mobilises television as a social and familial glue, is another example of female labour. The work the women do in watching television with others is part of the effort and labour of women in producing “home”. Rita Felski constructs the home as an active practising of place. Although it is synonymous with familiarity and routine, that familiarity is produced over time through the effort and labour of women and also that home is shaped by conflicts and power struggles between the individuals who live there (1999-2000). For Felski, the notion of “home” is complex and temporally fluid, and yet my research indicates that the types of labour carried out by women to create that “home” are cyclical.

In some sense the memories recounted to me broadly correspond with Bourdon’s “wallpaper” metaphor in that they appear to relegate television to the backdrop as the life story and relationship themselves take stage. Indeed there is a suggestion that “wallpaper memories” are somehow less satisfactory than others when Bourdon claims that, “Those memories often emerge with the help of the stimulus of program magazines, apparently because they are dormant and less emotional than the rest”. This is clearly not the case in my study. I would conclude that this is an area where gendered relationships to the past can be seen to differ both in terms of the ease of recollection and of the loading of emotion. In my interviews, the women’s talk about specific programmes was quite cursory, more a simple mention that they had watched it, until there was a biographical hook which would begin to fill out the details of their memories. This is why the lists at the end of the interviews, which did not also stimulate biographical memories, were the least successful part of the conversation. Further, it is indicative of the way that discussion of television programmes came out of personal memories, rather than vice versa.

The interview excerpts quoted here are notable for their concentration on memories of childhood and motherhood, the life course stages that most women were most able to narrate, whereas memories of teenage television viewing, aside from popular music programmes, were more difficult for the women to articulate. Many described their viewing as something which “dropped away” during this period, as other commitments began to eat into television viewing time. Such narratives indicate that there might be life stages or periods when we are more tied to and involved with the domestic. That there are life stages when the “wallpaper” itself is imbued with an emotional significance and that this might affect recollections of television as a domestic medium.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### MUSIC PROGRAMMES AND ADOLESCENT IDENTITY

The previous chapter examined the roles of memory and nostalgia in narrative, with a particular attention to the subject of motherhood as the dominant interview identity assumed by the women with whom I spoke. It was through this prism that most women who were mothers narrated their adult lives, frequently subsuming their own identities within wider contexts of family. Women, across generations, were more likely to talk about viewing that had been enjoyed with and by others in an everyday context rather than the programming which has specifically resonated with them as individuals. This relational aspect of viewing was how all the women that I spoke to framed their memories, and it was a central factor to how they accorded resonance to television texts. Rarely did women talk about programming that had a specific significance for them as individuals.

In this chapter on women's adolescent relationship with music programmes and in the following chapter on television and feminine desire I will examine the two interview themes which disrupted that pattern to some extent. In the case of this chapter, I will investigate why the particular example of pop music programming enabled women to interrogate their individual identities, rather than their identity as part of a wider family unit, during this life stage.

#### *Gender and Genre*

Scholarly work around female viewing preferences has customarily concentrated on genres such as soap opera and drama. Much of the research carried out in the 1980s and 1990s under a feminist mandate sought to rescue these denigrated 'feminine' genres (Modleski, 1979; Hobson, 1982; Brown, 1994). As such, soaps have come to be associated with female viewing pleasure and its relationship to feminine competences and domestic routines. As a result, arguably, women's relationship with that genre has historically been disproportionately investigated at the expense of others. As discussed in Chapter Five, many of the women clearly understood soap operas as a denigrated genre, which they placed low down in the viewing taste hierarchies which they presented to me. This knowledge moved many of the women to



distance themselves from the genre, through claims that they had either never watched soap opera at all, had watched it when younger but not now or that they watched it in the full knowledge that it was low quality. More recently the scope of academic investigation of gendered viewing has widened to include news, talk shows, reality television and documentary (Engel-Manga, 2003; Skeggs, Thumim and Wood, 2008; Hill, 2005 and 2007; Wood, 2009), but what other genres might have fallen through the gaps? Not only in terms of what women have watched simply because it was on or because it fitted in with what they were doing, but because it specifically 'spoke' to them in some way; because it particularly resonated with them at an individual level.

This interview data indicates that other genres have had an importance to women beyond fitting in around cleaning and household chores during specific life stages. Many of the memories indicated the ways that the rhythms of the home extend beyond those labours traditionally recognised as housework. Sports programmes were sometimes remembered fondly in terms of a shared experience with a male companion such as a husband or father, for example, and, as discussed in Chapter Six, those enjoyed with their own children have also had a particular significance for many women. However, these have been genres that women have talked about in terms of watching television as situated "amidst a variety of on-going social and personal relations that constitutes the wider, meaningful world that they inhabit" (Lembo, 2000:29). That is, it is the participative and sociable aspects of viewing with loved ones and the emotions that has engendered that the women recall, rather than because of the programmes' specific individualising personal resonance.

Of particular interest in this set of interviews has been the revelation that music programming has been integral to how white teenage girls have negotiated their adolescent years, both in terms of how they have created their teenage identities and also to the formation and maintenance of friendship groups. This is the clearest example of the different ways that television operates within the life course to emerge from my interview data. Erik Erikson's typology of social development, outlined in Chapter Six, refers to adolescence as the stage of "identity versus role confusion", during which the child learns the roles she will occupy as an adult. It is during this stage that the adolescent will re-examine her identity and try to find out exactly who she is (Erikson, 1959). It is striking, then, converse to the women's narration of both earlier and later stages of their lives, in which they subsumed their own viewing preferences and pleasures within wider themes of family, that this was the life stage that women

narrated primarily from a position of self, speaking about programmes “for them” which had particular resonance in their lives. This is, as I have suggested in previous chapters, the life stage where women are most liberated from the rhythms of the domestic and, therefore family. This liberty enables acknowledgement of their individuality.

The significance of music programming in women’s lives was the first clear trend to emerge from the interview process. Even before the interview process began, the responses that came to my call to interview were heavily laden with references to popular music programmes such as *Top of the Pops* (BBC1, 1964-2006), *Ready Steady Go* (ITV, 1963-1966), *The Tube* (C4, 1982-1987), *Jukebox Jury* (BBC1, 1959-1967), *Lunchbox* (ATV, 1956-1964) and *Six Five Special* (BBC1, 1957-1958). If the sheer number of memories of this kind was not enough to pique my interest, then the fact that this was also a trend common across class and for women of different generations was definitely intriguing. Nearly two thirds of the women I spoke to addressed the importance of the programmes in their lives without prompting, and to nine of those women, nearly one third of my sample, music programmes had a particular resonance. The women who were most talkative on the subject were (age in brackets) Dawn (42), Tracey, Sylvia, Penny (early 50s), Sue E, Hilary G, Fiona, Lynda (60s) and Belinda (70s) and it is these women’s interviews that I will draw upon most for the interview data for this chapter.

The oldest women in my sample, those in their eighties and nineties, had a slightly different relationship with music programming on television. As discussed in Chapter Four, television did not intervene in these older women’s lives during adolescence. This type of teenage musical programme did not begin to be broadcast until the late 1950s with programmes such as *Six-Five Special* (BBC, 1957-1958) and *Oh Boy!* (ATV, 1958-1959). By this period, the women who are now in their eighties and nineties were in their late twenties and early thirties, had moved out of adolescence and into a different life stage where they were wives and mothers. As such, their adolescent period of “Identity versus Confusion” (Erikson, 1959) pre-dated the medium of television. They did talk about the role of radio and music in their lives, and also spoke, albeit briefly, about enjoying the music programmes with their own children.

Critical academic investigation of the relationships that young women might have with popular music has been limited to questions around various forms of fandom (Brown and Schulze 1990; Ehrenreich, Hess and Jacobs 1992; Rhodes 2005) or how women

have 'managed' in the frequently misogynistic environment of rock music culture (Whiteley, 2000; Schippers, 2002). Norma Coates has drawn attention to the gendering of musical genres, noting the 'discursive and stylistic segregation' of rock and pop. She shows how rock music becomes associated with authenticity and pop music with artifice, so that ultimately the two are set in binary opposition whereby rock becomes understood as masculine and pop is feminine (Coates 1997, 52-53). Rock, of course, assumes the dominant position and much academic literature is concerned with locating women's identity within that culture. Critical engagement with the television audience of *pop* music programming has been rare, and where it has occurred it has not recognised the differing gendered positions that might exist in the viewing of music programmes (Cubitt, 1984), treating the entire youth audience as one homogenous group and preferencing music as a category for analysis over television (Frith, 2002).

Conversely, extant scholarship on women's identification with female pop and rock stars, such as Madonna and The Spice Girls (Kaplan, 1993; Danuta Walters, 1995; Budgeon, 1998; Lemish, 1998), along with work on music and "girl culture" (McRobbie, 2000; Wald, 1998) connects with the importance of female artists for young women watching music television which emerged from my interviews. So too does Karen Lury's account of her memory of Tracey Ullman, whose use of the hairbrush microphone in a *Top of the Pops* performance is for Lury a knowing celebration of her and other young women's own relationship with pop music and female performance. Here, Lury hints at the significance of this gendered performance for a female audience and demonstrates how different viewing groups might have a different relationship with the programme, "I understood Tracey Ullman's performance because I related to the myth of *Top of the Pops* in a particular way – because I am British, a woman, and had watched *Top of the Pops* for many years" (Lury, 2001, 45-46).

What emerges from my own set of interviews is a picture of music programming as a genre that women made space for as teenagers, at a point in their lives when other viewing fell away as social, familial and educational commitments began to encroach upon the free time they had spent watching television as children. Many described television during this phase of their lives as something which "dropped away", suggestive of a skin or clothing that had belonged to a different phase of their lives that could be divested. Yet their viewing of pop programmes prevailed, indicating that these music programmes were important enough to create this viewing space and time for when other genres were discarded.

One of the reasons music programmes were so popular with teenage girls is indicated by Rachel Moseley, who suggests that until the early 1980s British television had not created much specifically for the teenage audience. The age group was either grouped under children's television or was catered for "almost exclusively through pop music programming" (Moseley, 2007). Women who were teenagers in the 1950s, 1960s or 1970s, then, might have recalled these programmes as teenage viewing simply because that was the sole television output that appealed "to them" and which had been specifically conceived to address their interests. The address to both their age group and their gender is more clearly understood by them in the case of these music programmes than with other genres such as drama. The centrality of the genre to so many of their narratives around adolescence indicates that it did appeal to them very much, and their conversation around it was animated and extensive. Pop music programmes had a resonance and importance beyond merely being available to view. Women who were teenagers in the 1980s, when dramas such as *Going Out* (Southern Television, 1981), *Tucker's Luck* (BBC, 1983-1985) and *What Now?* (Channel 4, 1986) were targeted at a teenage audience, were also heavily invested in music programming.

The chapter that follows investigates the ways that women remembered using and enjoying these programmes as teenagers to gain a sense of why the genre might have been so important to women of varied social backgrounds and generations at this specific stage of the life course. Although many such programmes were mentioned throughout the interviews, this chapter will focus on *Top of the Pops*, *The Tube* and *Ready, Steady, Go*, the three programmes which were referenced most often and which prompted the most contextual conversation. I will consider how aspects of their enjoyment such as identification, women's talk and the importance of social participation through media have contributed to women's sense of self during this life stage of identity creation and self-discovery. When considered alongside Bourdieu's theorisations on cultural capital and taste and distinction this empirical data begins to illuminate how gender identity, life course and popular culture reception relate to each other.

### *The Programmes*

Before I embark upon an analysis of the conversation around pop programmes I should first introduce the three programmes which were most frequently referenced and which I have focussed upon in this chapter.

### *Ready, Steady, Go!*

Conceived by Elkan Allan, head of Rediffusion TV, *Ready, Steady, Go!* was produced without scenery or costumes and with a minimum of choreography or make-up. The programme was produced by Associated Rediffusion at London's Kingsway studio, and was broadcast live at 6pm on Friday evenings between August 1963 and December 1966. It was memorably introduced with the exhortation "The weekend starts here!", and was originally introduced by The Surfaris' "Wipe Out" and later by Manfred Mann's "5-4-3-2-1". The most famous presenters were Keith Fordyce and Cathy McGowan. It was notable for featuring the audience prominently as dancers and for the close interaction of artists and audience, embodying a "youthful, exuberant spirit of a nascent 'swinging' London" (Collie and Irwin, 2013:266). The producers chose the audience themselves, visiting London clubs and selecting the best or most fashionably dressed dancer to appear on the show. This ensured a very hip audience who were in tune with the artists and the programme had a particular following among the mod youth subculture of the 1960s.

### *Top of the Pops*

The long running BBC music chart television programme, based on the music charts, was originally broadcast weekly between 1 January 1964 and 30 July 2006. It was produced by the BBC's light entertainment department and during the period of my study it was broadcast on BBC1 on a Thursday evening. Each programme consisted of performances from some of that week's best-selling popular music artists, with a rundown of that week's singles chart. The show used a combination of music videos and studio performances, which were mimed for much of the show's run. The audience consisted of a relatively small number of older teenagers who were used around the studio wherever they were needed to look like a larger and excitable audience. The programme was presented by a variety of Radio One DJs, who across the period of interest included Dave Lee Travis, Jimmy Savile, Noel Edmonds and David Hamilton.

### *The Tube*

The Tube was a United Kingdom pop and rock music television programme, which ran for five seasons, from November 1982 until 1987. It was produced in Newcastle upon Tyne for Channel 4 by Andrea Wonfor, head of Tyne Tees Television's youth and children's department, which had previously produced the similar music show *Alright Now* and the music-oriented youth show *Check it Out* for ITV. *The Tube* was broadcast

live from Tyne Tees studios by a number of hosts, the most famous of which are Jools Holland and Paula Yates. The show's cornerstone was the live performances from three or four bands each week. In an era where most music television shows featured extensive miming, the fully live sets by the guest artists lent the programme credibility, despite the poor quality sound mix. The programme was built around a 45 minute magazine section consisting of interviews, fashion items and comedy appearances by a wide range of alternative artistes, interspersed with four or five band appearances per week, with one main extended session to close the show.

*Ready, Steady, Go!* and *The Tube*, particularly, were shaped with a strong female presence, in both production and presentation. Both also had a strong youth appeal in terms of the choice of credible musicians who were selected to perform and the sets that they used which conveyed the image of swinging 60s club and gritty, underground music den respectively (Collie and Irwin, 2013). *Top of the Pops*, created by Robin Nash in the BBC Light Entertainment department and, therefore, designed to appeal to the whole family, managed "cool and credible" less effectively but still emerged from these interviews as an important programme to many of my interviewees.

#### *Resourceful Girls*

The typical and enduring popular culture representation of girls' engagement with music is of the hysterical fan, screaming for her most recent object of lust, a trope which has been reiterated time and again from the Beatlemania of the 1960s to more recent depictions of Justin Bieber's Beliebers. Some of the interviews did involve discussion around attraction to male stars. As Tracey put it:

'I used to love watching [Top of the Pops] for David Cassidy and David Essex. All of those. But then I discovered David Bowie, and he had my heart forever.'

Tracey, (50)

Patricia also spoke about her crush on Cliff Richard which led her to avidly consume music programmes so that she could see him. She recalled how a family member scathingly suggested that he would be here one minute and gone the next and Patricia felt vindicated by his longevity. In choosing to talk about men Tracey and Patricia were in the minority, and this attraction did not emerge over all as the main reason the women wanted to tell me about music programming or why their connections with and memories of the programmes remained so strong after all this time.

Access to music, for free, that they could not otherwise access or afford was a strong theme in the interviews, and all the music programmes were remembered as equally important and useful to this end. Sylvia remembered how important music programmes were for her to maintain street cred amongst her peers;

‘We used to record Top of the Pops. Cos we didn’t have any money so we used to do it on tape. We’d have been quite geeky without it I think. It was important.’

(Sylvia, 52)

Sylvia grew up in a working class family in the East End of London in the 1970s. Her father had died when she was young and her mother was the family’s only breadwinner. Within the context of talking about *Top of the Pops* she remembered how her mother used to let her and her younger brother have parties, and the music they played was all recorded from the television or radio because that was the only way they could afford to own their favourite music. Dawn also recalled using *The Tube* and *The Old Grey Whistle Test* (BBC2, 1971-1987) to curate and archive her own personal musical selections;

‘Yeah, we would keep stuff like that for ages, and it would get re-watched quite a lot. And have little collections, certainly for certain bands, and kind of record certain songs...we were much more – rather than now, when you go out and leave it to set record entire programmes, back then you’d be sat there with the remote control specifically getting the songs that you wanted. Cos really it was the same as having it on record but you could get it free.’

(Dawn, 42)

Some women went to extraordinary lengths to record the songs they particularly liked from the television;

‘We had a Grundig reel-to-reel tape recorder, cos cassettes weren’t invented then and we hung the microphone over the speaker of the telly to record the songs from *Top of the Pops*. So that we had ready-made records.’

(Sue E, 60)

The importance of this means of obtaining permanent copies of music for free, essentially pre-dating illegal digital downloading by several decades, was a frequent topic of conversation during discussion of music programming. Several women spoke about this type of engagement, which differs from Ann Gray’s depiction of women’s strategic refusal of recording technology as a chore (Gray, 1992). This is clearly related to their adolescent life stage. While Gray’s study of women aged between 19 and 52

dealt with their on-going negotiation of television around the dynamics of the household, my interviewees were evoking a period of youth when they had free time and which may be tinged with nostalgia, as discussed in Chapter Six, rather than dealing with the pressures of the everyday. These memories struck a chord with me, and were evocative of many Sunday afternoons spent in my bedroom, listening to the Top Forty with my finger hovering over the record button so I could record the ones I particularly liked. But my memory, and the reminiscences of the women who also talk about the musical importance of the radio, demonstrate that this access to music cannot fully explain the significance or resonance of the programmes. Music could be just as easily recorded from the radio, where both the choice and possibly even the cultural prestige of youth music offered by that medium would surely have been greater. As such, the importance of music performance as broadcast on television must, therefore, stem in some way from the visual capacity of the medium.

As conversation around the subject progressed it became clear that not all music programmes were created equally in teenage girl's eyes. As outlined in Chapter Five, Pierre Bourdieu indicates how aesthetic concepts such as taste are defined by those in power, and demonstrates how social class tends to determine a person's likes and interests, as well as how those distinctions are reinforced in daily life (Bourdieu, 1984). In that chapter I drew attention to the significance of class and generation to formations of taste. What emerges in this particular instance is a slightly different picture of the construction of hierarchies of taste and distinction. Social class was not a factor in the women's engagement with pop music programmes, but it is accurate to say that, in this particular instance, ideas around what constitutes "good" and "bad" taste are being defined by those teenage girls who wield power. That is, the controllers of this field are not members of class elites. When asked about important teenage viewing, the women would frequently begin by talking about *Top of the Pops* and its importance in the weekly schedule. It genuinely appears to have been 'can't miss television', in that to miss it was to be excluded from playground or office conversation the following day when everyone else would be discussing the programme, reminiscent of Dorothy Hobson's work talk around soap operas after the viewing event as what moved television into 'a further dimension from that which ends with the viewing moment' (Hobson, 1992:167), and serves as a further reminder that programme genres other than soap opera can operate within women's talk in this way.



However, as the conversation and reminiscence continued many of the women would often come to the conclusion that they had actually often found *Top of the Pops* “crap”, “boring” or “rubbish”. Sue E had kept diaries throughout the period and noted that she had many diary entries that wrote about *Top of the Pops* in these terms. Throughout the interviews, the audience were criticised for their unfashionable clothes and for not looking as though they were enjoying themselves;

‘It used to make me laugh how sort of rigid the audience were. You were lucky if they shuffled from one foot to the other really...they sometimes didn’t even look like they were enjoying it. Serious. And very old fashioned. Tank tops, boring T-shirts and A-line skirts. Things like that.’

Tracey (50)

Their recollections of the programme serve as another example of how women are taking pleasure in discrimination by asserting their own taste and cultural knowledge (Bourdieu, 1984) as discussed earlier. *Top of the Pops*’ success lay, despite their dislike of the programme, in offering them a space for superiority in terms of distinction, judgement and knowledge.

*Top of the Pops*’ male presenters, such as Mike Reid, Dave Lee Travis, Jimmy Savile and David Hamilton, were also maligned, particularly by the younger women who feminist sensibilities were more developed<sup>8</sup>. They were criticised for being old, out of touch, and for ogling and pawing at the young girls who made up the audience;

‘I didn’t really connect with, like, Mike Reid on Top of the Pops, or Dave Lee Travis. Cos it always looked to me like they were ogling up to the young girls. And I think even as a young girl I just kind of didn’t like it... I think even then I disliked seeing a man in power then the only women I could see were just dolly birds. And even at quite a young age I wanted a bit more. You know?’

Dawn (42)

In contrast, many of the women appear to have had a completely different relationship with *Ready Steady Go!* and *The Tube* and particularly the female presenters of those programmes, Cathy McGowan and Paula Yates. While female presenters, such as

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<sup>8</sup> On 3rd October 2012, *Exposure*, an ITV current affairs series, named former Top of the Pops presenter Jimmy Savile as a paedophile and relentless sexual predator. The police enquiry Operation Yewtree was convened in the wake of the allegations to investigate alleged sexual abuse and the sexual abuse of children. A number of television personalities including former Top of The Pops presenter Dave Lee Travis were detained and questioned in relation to this. I interviewed the women quoted in this thesis between June 2011 and March 2012, significantly pre-dating the scandal, and the implicitly sexual overtones of the relationship promoted by middle aged DJs with young female pop fans was commented upon in several of the interviews.

Janice Long of *Top of the Pops*, went unremarked, McGowan and Yates emerged as absolutely central to why, as girls, these women devoured the genre, and both were frequently referenced as style icons and role models.

### *Cathy and Paula*

Before I go on to discuss the role that these two women played in my interviewee's memories of pop music programmes, I will sketch a brief outline of each woman during the period that they presented these programmes.



Fig 1. Cathy McGowan



Fig 2. Paula Yates

McGowan started her career working in the offices at *Ready, Steady, Go!*'s production company Associated Rediffusion. She had responded initially to an advert to find a “typical teenager” to act as an advisor to the programme and was later promoted to a presenting role (Hogan, 2011). She became an influential trendsetter as one of the programme's hosts, with the privileged and enviable weekly task of interviewing top groups of the period, including the Beatles to the Rolling Stones.<sup>9</sup> Her fan status was evident in her presentation style as she stumbled over her lines and was visibly flustered and excited when talking to famous musicians. McGowan was an early patron

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of the fashion house Biba (Hulanicki, 2007) and had her own fashion range at British Home Stores (Wiseman, 2006). After Fordyce's departure in March 1965, McGowan continued to present *Ready, Steady, Go!* until it ended on 23 December 1966. Dominic Sandbrook recognises the contribution made by the programme as a whole, and McGowan particularly, to the exciting youth culture of the 1960s:

"Thanks to the enthusiastic salesmanship of McGowan and her fellow presenters, the emerging youth culture that had once been confined to the capital [London] or to the great cities could now be seen and copied almost immediately from Cornwall to the Highlands". The musician and jazz critic George Melly thought RSG "made pop music work on a truly national scale ... It was almost possible to feel a tremor of pubescent excitement from Land's End to John O'Groats". (Sandbrook, 2006).

Paula Yates was a dominant presence on Channel 4's *The Tube*, using her own brand of subversive and disarming femininity to orchestrate chaotic, edgy interviews. It is significant that it is her style that the interviewees related to rather than the less overtly feminine look of another female presenter, Murial Gray. In a period when pregnancy was discreetly veiled in generously cut smocks, best exemplified by Princess Diana's billowing maternity wear, and pregnant women were largely absent from television, Yates displayed her pregnancy with confidence and relish. She was a staple of popular magazines, such as the *TV Times* which in September 1984 featured a lavish colour spread of Yates wearing her take on the early 1980s craze for tartan. She had a reputation for flirtatious behaviour, as in her interview with rock royalty Mick Jagger, telling him she may have to be 'hosed down' in the presence of his huge sex appeal (10 December 1982).

### *Uses of Pop Programming*

The women I interviewed talked about these programmes in a way that gave the impression that McGowan and Yates were their only presenters. Their male counterparts Keith Fordyce and Jools Holland were not mentioned once. This suggests something different to me to the hysterical and hormonally charged screaming girl fans of popular culture (Ehrenreich et al, 1992; Wald, 2002), and it also feels different to work carried out on music video which so often places women solely as a sexualised 'object' (Aubrey et al, 2011). It was other women who were the focus of their attention, and not in a sexualised way.

Arguably, *Top of the Pops'* importance and the fact it is remembered at all is tied up in questions around how we remember and to what extent we recall popular culture

because it has been fed back to us through that same popular culture (O'Sullivan, 1991, 2007; Holdsworth, 2008, 2010). *Top of the Pops* is still very much in the public conscience having broadcast up until 2006. Additionally, the BBC has successfully managed its legacy with programmes such as *TOTP2* (BBC2, 1994 - present) and the current re-screenings of full length episodes from the 1970s. This memorialisation may be the reason that *Top of the Pops* is the first such programme to occur to the interviewees, even though so many of them went on to express their frequent disappointment in it over programmes that they actually had enjoyed? Once the women remembered their relationship with the programme they would move on to remember the other programmes that they had, in fact, enjoyed more. Work on young women and pop music programming carried out with my colleague Mary Irwin as part of the wider project that I am attached sought to draw attention to this previously underexplored relationship. My interview data directed Mary's route into the archives to uncover the gendered textual invitations behind the programmes. This particular gendered relationship with music programmes might not have emerged at all had we continued to work with notions of what constitutes 'television for women' when those notions are constructed solely from production and textual analysis. Yet a rich seam of material existed in the archives in relation to how the programmes were marketed and their mode of address. The emergence of this nuanced relationship with music programmes in the interviews demonstrates the importance of this type of empirical research. If scholars rely only on the canon delivered by the industry, this relationship would have been lost.

To understand the relationship we need to understand how the women were using the programmes. The access to music that they offered has been discussed briefly already, but there is another aspect to the music broadcast by the programmes that requires consideration. Musical performances on the shows were often central to playground or work conversation the next day, essentially helping to form friendship groups. While it has been easy to dismiss gossip as 'idle talk', this fails to account for the complex processes at play in the activity. The function of gossip in women's talk has come to be recognised as a tool of solidarity, based on 'linguistic reciprocity' (Jones, 1990) and establishing a connection between participants that leads to a discussion of shared values (Coates, 1996). However, an additional feature of gossip is that it can be used to establish and maintain power relations (Troemel-Ploetz, 1998). It is precisely through these twin functions of the discussion of the programmes beyond the moment of broadcast that a field of teenage girlhood begins to emerge; a field

where a game to be won is played out (Bourdieu, 1986). Several of the women in their sixties and seventies spoke about how novel it was to see the performances of some of the big acts from America, and that often television performances were their only means of so doing. Lynda recalled the excitement of seeing the American artist Bill Haley perform on *Top of the Pops*, even though she also criticises the programme for its low production quality and miming artists. Marilyn, who grew up in a remote village in Powys, Wales, also discussed *Top of the Pops* in terms of her favourite performances;

‘I mean then it was wonderful to have *Top of the Pops*. I was watching it when P.J Proby, he split his trousers singing. And he was always known for that. I was watching – every Thursday night that used to come on at seven.’

(Marilyn, 64)

Here Marilyn’s assertion that she was there, that she saw this incident at the time of broadcast, is still important enough to her that she is moved to specify it to an academic interviewer fifty years later. On first glance, this memory suggests that at the original time of viewing its significance must have been extremely prodigious to her, indicating the importance of the access that the television music programmes offered girls in areas which, geographically, were not likely to receive visits from the ‘big’ acts and also to girls of generations who had less freedom of movement and less disposable income to spend on attending concerts than their male peers. Marilyn’s recollections also indicate the importance of key memories to different stages of the life course. While P.J Proby’s “wardrobe malfunction” might not constitute a ‘big’ memory moment in Mary Ann Doane’s terms (Doane, 1990), it represents a key moment to the teenage Marilyn which has since become a key memory. Interestingly, however, this is also a false memory. P.J Proby’s trousers actually split on stage at the Castle Hall, Croydon on the 29th January 1965 and again at the Ritz Cinema, Luton, on 31st January, effectively ending his career as a teen idol in the United Kingdom. Marilyn has built up this false memory over time due to its ongoing notoriety in the media but has attached it to *Top of the Pops*, further indicating the significance of the programme to her personal narrative.

### *Identification*

Fashion and style was a huge draw of music programming for generations who grew up on *Ready, Steady, Go!* (those in their sixties and seventies) and *The Tube* (those in their forties and fifties). The audience and female acts of both programmes were

scrutinised for fashion ideas, with singers such as Cilla Black, Lulu and Dusty Springfield being particularly fondly remembered for their fabulous hair and sense of style. As mentioned previously the relative unstylishness of the *Top of the Pops* audience was one of the reasons to deride the programme across all ages, but particularly by women in their sixties who compared it to the very stylish and Mod-inspired audience of *Ready, Steady, Go!* Again, however, it was the female presenters of *Ready, Steady, Go!* and *The Tube* who were foremost in the style stakes for girls. Their clothes, hair and make-up were scrutinised to be practised at home and copied for Friday night out on the town and the visual importance of the programmes specifically in informing how girls looked is perfectly summarised by Fiona in the context of her talk around *Ready, Steady, Go!* and Cathy McGowan's style;

'I personally did my thing and I wasn't interested in sharing. If [other girls] came and didn't look fashionable, well sorry you obviously haven't been watching the same programmes as I have. I'm not going to tell you what to watch or wear. I thought of myself as a leader of fashion.'

(Fiona, 64)

Cathy and Paula were not only integral to how the girls created their physical teenage appearances. The importance of the programmes was not entirely tied up with girls making themselves attractive, and what is stark is that not one of the women talked about looking like McGowan or Yates in the hope of appealing to boys. This was a styling and femininity that appealed to girls, who adopted it as a signifier to other girls as indicated by Fiona. Additionally, it seems that the very presence of women who seemed to be 'like me', on television in the music programmes was inspirational, and for many girls it opened up the choice to be in charge of their own destinies and legitimated their choices to do and be someone different to what they felt society and their family expected of them. This was particularly strongly felt by Dawn, who at 42 years of age was the youngest of the women I interviewed. When I asked her if anyone on television had been a role model for her, she indicated that it had been Paula Yates because it was so refreshing 'to get a woman as a presenter who was firstly not really posh, and could also pull off being sexy as well, and come over as being smart'. Later, when we talked about how big a role television had played in her life, she built upon this theme.

Dawn: Yeah, I think even despite the fact I was quite selective in what I watched, things like *The Tube* and things like that probably kind of helped place

me in the youth culture that I was in. And probably say to me it's okay what you're doing and to help me move away from my family. And I think at the same time it probably helped me form ideas about higher aspirations. I mean despite the fact, at the time, I didn't act on them and I was a really poor student...but having said that I did - when I hit 19 I did, I mean I travelled round the world on my own, so maybe in a way it did - it actually made me...it made me have higher aspirations and it made me look at ways of breaking sort of barriers in the only way that I saw possible at that time?

Hazel: Yeah. So you think it gave you a sense that you were allowed to create your own identity?

Dawn: Yeah, very much so. And I think it showed me that I didn't want the conventional route and that I was allowed to reject it. Um...I suspect that without television I could have been leading a much more conventional standard life. The life that was probably expected.

Dawn credited *The Tube* with expanding her cultural horizons, legitimating her access to a culture that had been absent in her life up to this point. She identified Paula Yates as her route into this new culture and, as such, the level of her identification with Yates was fundamental to her emerging teenage self.

In her work on women's relationship with female cinematic stars of the Hollywood Golden Age, Jackie Stacey has constructed a complex and nuanced account of the pleasures of cinematic identification and the processes of the formations of feminine identities. While on one hand the women she studied valued difference which could transport them into a world where their desires might be fulfilled, while on the other, they valued similarity for enabling them to recognise qualities they already had (Stacey, 1994: 128). In my own interviews this identification with the female stars of the music programmes and attempted appropriation of their styles is apparent. Dawn talks about Paula Yates' look deeply influencing her own, while Sue Elliott goes further in stating that "like most girls I probably wanted to be Cathy McGowan". It was not enough to look like her; she would also like to be her. Cinematic and televisual apparatuses are very different and as such, Stacey's theory needs to be slightly adjusted to account for television. In the way the women's attention was fixed on McGowan and Yates over and above the many, very stylish, female acts on the programmes there is a sense that these two women captured girls' imagination and attention because they were less starry than the featured musicians, and certainly than cinematic idols the, but additionally more familiar through their weekly appearance on television. In their positions as television personalities, rather than film stars, they were just glamorous

enough to want to emulate, but their position was not so out of reach for the girls to possibly achieve as the Hollywood stars of Stacey's work or the female A list musical stars of the time.

Work on Madonna in the 1980s has constructed her rise to popularity as a moment in which popular culture imitates critical theories of history, knowledge, and human identity (Fiske, 1989; Kaplan, 1987 & 1993). Although none of the women name-checked Madonna as an influence or role model, this work lays out a useful framework by which to understand my interviewees' identification with and use of Yates and McGowan. For John Fiske, Madonna enabled her fans to reject the subject position constructed by the dominant patriarchal ideology (Fiske, 1989), while for E Ann Kaplan, a highly feminised cultural icon such as Madonna might provide girls with a set of symbolic tools by which they can subvert definitions of femininity (Kaplan, 1993). So, too, might the very particular, and eminently more achievable to an adolescent, femininities represented by Yates and McGowan.

The media is often considered to play a central role in modern meaning making and identity creation. Liesbet Van Zoonen suggests that "[i]dentity is always in process, never finished, stable or true. Media reception is one of the practices in which the construction of (gender) identity takes place" (Van Zoonen, 1994: 123). In her analysis of magazines, Joke Hermes draws attention to role of media figures in identity construction, arguing that popular media figures link the "abstract" of the media text to the daily viewing practice of the media audience (Hermes, 1999). The media figure enables personalisation, whereby a central figure is provided to satisfy audience engagement with stories, while also offering an opportunity to identify. Identification becomes part of a process that motivates meaning making. Television offers a particular proximity and with its stars, which other cultural objects cannot. The medium provides regular and familiar "navigation points" as individuals steer their own personal routes through life (Gauntlett, 2002). Precisely because the women did not talk of their imitation of the two presenters in terms of attracting boys, it is tempting to view it as a practice that they carried out for themselves as part of their creation of themselves as women.

### *Resistance*

The increased engagement between contemporary feminist theory and Pierre Bourdieu's work was attended to in some detail in Chapter Five, drawing attention to



the temporal and generational aspects to the validity of cultural capital. That which has a high cultural value to one generation may be worthless to another yet continues to have a resonance throughout the life course.

In the case of teenage girls' interaction with pop music programmes, Bourdieu's work on social field and cultural capital is again significant (Bourdieu, 1993: 197) and the aim is to rule the field through many and varied strategies, thereby achieving the power to confer or withdraw legitimacy from the other participants. Each field generates a specific habitus, 'a system of dispositions adjusted to the game' (Ibid: 34). The habitus, which is particularly useful to my work here, is the means by which we acquire ways of being through practice and socialisation rather than through conscious, formalised learning throughout our whole lives.

Beverley Skeggs rejects the idea of habitus, suggesting that recourse to femininity is actually more performative in its nature. Her research on working class teenage girls concludes that their feminine practice was something they were forced to do, as the only form of cultural capital available to them, because the consequences of appearing to reject that femininity were potentially devastating, leading to a loss of respectability (Skeggs, 1997). The women's participation in programmes such as *The Tube* or *Ready, Steady, Go!* is not entirely about feminine practice, although such practice explains the appropriation of role models such as McGowan and Yates, who exuded a kind of femininity that girls wanted to recreate for themselves to deploy within their own field. However, in neither case was it a type of femininity that teenage girl's parents or other authority figures might recognise either as femininity or as a desirable trait. What is illustrated resembles a Venn diagram of different fields of operation, and how they intersect and overlap. Fiona's memory of hiding the length of her skirt from her father suggests that recourse to this femininity had the potential to cause loss of respectability in his eyes, in the field of parental relationships, that Fiona recognised this and was keen to avoid that outcome. Yet, in different fields of the wider public domain, and certainly within the field of teenage girlhood, the potential for loss of respectability was a risk that girls were prepared to take.

The women came from varied social backgrounds and were watching these programmes in different decades of the twentieth century. As such, there are a variety of different habituses at play in the interview data. One aspect that is particularly striking is that social class does not appear to be a factor in how the women I interviewed used music programming. In this case, I would suggest that maintaining

“respectability”, as defined by an older generation, was not as important as operating within and belonging to this feminine, teenage culture. In the women’s extensive discussion about the access to music and associated cultures that these programmes offered, they indicate another means of cultural capital that is not wholly predicated upon a traditional feminine performativity, and one which receives its legitimacy from within the field itself, from other teenage girls, rather than from more traditional and authoritarian sources. Valerie Walkerdine has interrogated the easy application of theories of resistance to working class girls’ behaviour, suggesting that what is often naively and lazily perceived as “resistance” is, in fact, a mechanism for coping (Walkerdine 1997). In light of these women’s recollections of pop music programming, I begin to wonder whether this is actually a commonality of the teenage girl experience, and possibly adolescence generally, across social class and over time. Adolescents ‘manage’ and they do so by appearing to fit in and striving to belong, in this case to the specific field of teenage girlhood.

We begin to get a clear sense from the interviews that within this particular teenage and feminine culture, there are certain ways of being that can give girls an enhanced cultural position amongst their peers, or within the field of teenage girlhood. This is apparent in Fiona’s pride at being a “leader of fashion” among her friends, and her scorn for those who had not been watching the right programmes and did not know how to dress. It is also apparent in the way that others recall the importance of the programmes in enabling them to know the Top Twenty, not to miss the big performances and to be included in discussion of what happened in the programme. There is a definite desire to be included in the game.

What is also clear is that in the viewing of music programmes girls were creating their own, domestic, rebellion. It appears that at best parents and grandparents were bemused by the shows; they didn’t ‘get’ them. Jenny recalled being babysat by her grandmother and dancing along to the Jackson Five perform *ABC* on *Top of the Pops*, while her grandmother looked on with an expression of absolute incomprehension. The programme may have been conceived to be family friendly, but in her memory of viewing this particular episode Jenny explicitly notes that the programme did not ‘speak’ to her grandmother in the way that it ‘spoke’ to her. Jenny’s narrative, like others that I collected, indicates a definite feeling on the part of women that music programmes were ‘for’ them as teenage girls, and not for their parents or other older family members. This is not to say that the programmes were necessarily addressed to

teenage girls, but this was certainly how the women remember feeling about the programmes as girls.

At the other end of the spectrum parents did not like or approve of the shows and viewing at all was an act of defiance, likened here by Belinda to radio broadcasts on the new and exciting station Radio Caroline<sup>10</sup>.

'Cos you won't believe this – well, you probably will cos you've heard other people saying it, I mean, when we only had the radio...um...a lot of children – teenagers – weren't allowed to listen to the...what was it? The light p... where you had pop music, things like that? [HC: Yes] You weren't allowed. You know, cos it was just thought – Radio Luxemburg and things like that, you had to listen to it under the bed covers because parents just didn't like you doing it. They thought you could be corrupted by it. And I guess it was much the same this with parental control over television for a lot of people.'

Belinda Price (72)

Interestingly, Belinda was not allowed to watch music programmes as a teenager at home because her father did not approve of the shows, but she remembered enjoying them once she had married and particularly once she had children. In fact, two other women (who both also married and became mothers in their late teens) also recalled enjoying *Top of the Pops* and *Ready Steady Go* at that period in their lives, remembering how dancing along to their favourite songs after the birth of their children in some small way made up for the fact that they could not go out any more. Such television programmes went some way towards dissolving the barrier between the public and the private for these women by transporting them to the clubs and gigs that they could no longer attend. This ability to transform and blur the private/public distinction is a central aspect of television's role in the everyday (Silverstone, 1994) in extending the reach of home and what can be accessed from within that home. In this particular case, television pop music programmes offered a compensatory practice to those women who had recently been tied to the domestic by motherhood. This type of reminiscence calls to mind work on tactics, which are by their nature opportunistic and which gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time, and everyday life (de

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<sup>10</sup> Radio Caroline was a British radio station founded in 1964 by Ronan O'Rahilly to circumvent the record companies' control of popular music broadcasting in the United Kingdom and the BBC's radio broadcasting monopoly. Unlicensed by any government for most of its early life, it was a pirate radio station which only became formally illegal in 1967. After its 6 pm close-down, the station returned to the air at 8 pm and continued until after midnight. This was to avoid direct competition with popular television programmes. Most of Radio Caroline's pop music programmes were aimed at housewives. Later, children were targeted. Without serious competition, Radio Caroline quickly gained a daytime audience of several million listeners.

Certeau, 1984). De Certeau's focus here is on the practices of ordinary people and the ways in which they consume social representations and assume normative modes of behaviour. These practices of consumption are not passive social actions, but are in fact very specific and deliberate 'ways of operating' or 'doing things'. By 'using' and 'consuming' culture, ordinary people are engaged at the most basic level on which life is lived, in a 'making'. The way the women remember using television for transportation speaks strongly of a tactic developed to manage their everyday lives and identities. Here we have another scene of small-scale and domestic rebellion against the way in which women were expected to behave, and again the importance of access that the television offered to this culture is emphasised.

### *The Field of Teenage Girlhood*

Essentially, in this access offered to fashion, music, celebrities and, to some extent, lifestyle advice, my interviewees were using music programmes as an extension of teen magazines. This was a position that was made explicit by Fiona when she talked about how difficult it could be to get the magazines she wanted in 1960s' Aberdeen, and how these programmes filled that void to some extent. The domestic nature of viewing these programmes, and the opportunity for some form of rebellion, is particularly feminine in character, if we consider that traditionally boys have had more freedom outside the home. Angela McRobbie's extensive empirical work (McRobbie 1976, 1978, 1991 and 2000) on working class teenage girls' culture is pertinent to my work. She asks how girls are placed in youth cultures, so while boys appear to be participatory and at the forefront (for example, Teddy Boys and the Mod/Rocker confrontations) girls seem to be absent. Her suggestion is that instead of trying to place girls in boys' cultures, it would be more useful to recognise that the girls' participation is sustained by a complementary, but different pattern. So while boys are participative and technically informed, girls are more likely to be fans and readers. Here we see that there are different ways of "wearing' knowledge" (Straw 1997), and that there may be gendered differences at play. Again Bourdieu's work on field and habitus illuminates precisely how and why this might be; that the field of teenage boydom has different rules for control than the field of teenage girlhood. McRobbie identifies feminine teenage fan activity as a bedroom culture, a private culture, and has demonstrated how fashion, hair and make-up ideas are picked up from magazines and practised at home in private. Her research was carried out in the late 1970s and early 1980s, making it comparatively contemporary with some of the women's memories

from my interviews. If anything, this period could be seen as a more liberated moment than some of the histories which the women I spoke to shared. McRobbie's research is to some extent echoed in the way the women I spoke to recall their adolescent consumption of the musical culture of these programmes. Where my interview data differs from McRobbie's adolescent girls, however, is that while relating a very specific feminine culture, the women I spoke to do not narrate something that can be viewed as 'bedroom culture'. Their conversation around this particular topic and life stage, as I hope to demonstrate over the remainder of this chapter, was more about being transported *out* of the domestic than locating themselves firmly within it as they did in their memories of adult viewing.

In most cases the women recalled watching the programme at home with their family, firmly locating themselves in the domestic sphere and frequently choosing to talk about their relationship with the programme through their relationships with others. Here there is a distinct positioning of the girl viewer in the familial and shared space of the living room rather than the privacy of her own bedroom, directly related again to the periodization of these memories during which homes only had one television which was located in the shared space of the living room. Patricia (65) chose to remember that her step father watched her dancing and miming along to *Six Five Special* instead of watching the programme himself as if he could not believe his eyes. She drew attention to the gendered differences in the way teenagers watched the programme when she says 'he only had boys for goodness' sake'. Although Patricia watched *Six Five Special* with her mother, step-father and three step-brothers, only she was so engrossed that she performed along with it. Similarly Penny recalled dancing to The Jackson Five during one edition of *Top of the Pops* when her grandmother was babysitting and wondered, with hindsight, what on earth her grandmother had made of the whole event.

Two of the women, Hilary G and Jane, spoke about their consumption of music programmes during later adolescence when they were at nursing and teaching college respectively. Although not watching in a domestic context, both drew attention to the group viewing of *Top of the Pops* on the common room television that took place every Thursday evening, again giving their talk about the programme a relational quality.

'When I went into nursing the only thing we had time to watch was *Top of the Pops*. We used to make a beeline for that. Every Thursday that was it. All the nurses round the telly for *Top of the Pops*.'

I feel that this gives some insight into the importance of the shared aspect of the programmes to women. Although they were often watched at home with family, part of the enjoyment of the genre was as a shared experience with friends either during the act of viewing or through later conversation and socialising when notes on performances and fashion could be compared, as indicated by Marilyn's insistence that she had seen PJ Proby split his trousers.

*Men, Women and Youth Cultures*

A fortuitous opportunity to talk to men about their experiences of music television was presented to me when the research project I have been attached to as a PhD student, A History of Television for Women: 1947 – 1989, set up The Pop Up TV Pop Shop<sup>11</sup>, an innovative impact event in a disused shop in Coventry city centre. It materialized that male adolescent's responses to the programmes had not been that different to the women's, and that music programming had been important to them as adolescents. Men also talked about the thrill of seeing their favourite bands on television and copying the style of male musicians and on the shows. Where the men's recollections differed significantly from the women's, however, was in the way they used their initial memories of watching the programmes to go on to situate themselves within youth culture of the time. Whereas the women I interviewed and spoke to in the shop spoke about their engagement with the programmes and presenters, and then moved on to talk about family viewing and associated publications and beautifying activities that went on domestically, the men's memories instead quickly turned to the clubs and gigs they attended outside of the home. They additionally used it as an opportunity to educate me about various musical and technical aspects of youth sub-cultures, reiterating both the pattern of boys as technically informed and participative and girls as fans and readers (Garber and McRobbie, 1976) and the gendered public/private distinction.

The analysis of my interview data appears to expose gaps in some of Simon Frith's assumptions about the relationship between youth and music on television. In suggesting that one of the limitations for television as a music medium is its relatively

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<sup>11</sup> The Pop-Up TV Pop Shop was set up in a disused Baker's Oven shop in Coventry city centre, as part of a working relationship between Coventry City Council, Artspace, and the 'A History of Television for Women in Britain, 1947-1989' project. Interview quotes and visual stimuli were displayed, and members of the public were invited in and encouraged to talk about their memories of pop music programming.

poor sound quality he has assumed that the quality of musical experience is key to why viewers might watch music programmes. As I have demonstrated at length in this chapter, the music itself was not the only reason to watch. He also suggests that 'the musical moments that we remember are the ones that disrupt the flow, that become newsworthy' (2002:280, Frith's own emphasis), citing Elvis Presley's comeback gig in 1968 or *LiveAid* in 1985. Aside from PJ Proby's split trousers and one mention of the late night repeat of *LiveAid* as viewing material chosen by Patricia on a particularly arduous night of breastfeeding a young baby, the majority of the interviewees did not talk about anything that could be considered newsworthy in these programmes at all. In fact, what they remember is as mundane and decidedly un-newsworthy as the act of viewing and how the programmes then filtered into their daily lives. Although *LiveAid* was an enormous and unprecedented event at the time it was broadcast, Patricia remembers it because of the value that she attached to the quotidian act of breastfeeding her baby. Although he writes about music on television, Frith does not use television as his analytical focus, but the music. In doing so, he fails to account for the significance of the quotidian nature of television in terms of how it sustains lives and routines, day in and day out (Scannell, 1996). The music audience has certain expectations for that music, but the function of television and, therefore, music when broadcast on television, is quite different.

Frith argues that music and television are mutually exclusive. That because 'youth self-consciously differentiates itself from the rhythms of daily family life' (Frith, 2002: 280) television music programmes were created to be family friendly and to appeal to parents as much as to youthful viewers. He also categorically states that adolescents don't watch television because they are otherwise engaged with youthful acts of experiencing popular and musical cultures in their true dominion of clubs and pubs, "out of the house in public spaces" (*ibid*:280). I would suggest that these assumptions are in fact both gendered and generational. In talking about the programmes, far from differentiating themselves, the women actively situated themselves within the domestic rhythms of daily family life and rarely talked about their musical consumption in public terms. Only Fiona and Hilary went on to extrapolate their memories of the programmes into what they did when they went out, and in both cases this related to their appearance rather than the musical culture of where they went or, even, what they did when they got there. Fiona recalled wearing a long parka and pulling her skirt down to make it look longer so her father would not disapprove, before running round the corner to where her boyfriend waited with his scooter, hitching her skirt back up above the

knee and jumping on the back of the scooter. Hilary G's recollection of an R&B club in Derby which she used to attend revolved entirely around the other girl's hairstyles and clothes, and she actually related the fashions back to television when she exclaimed 'Oh, it was so *Top of the Pops!*' As previously mentioned, the men I spoke to in the Pop Up TV Pop Shop did talk extensively about their public engagement with wider youth culture and not about their lives at home. Frith has engaged with issues around gendered relationships with music before (Frith and McRobbie, 1978), and that he has seemingly forgotten this complexity is indicative of a more general lack of interest male academics display in feminine cultures. Additionally, while the earlier music programmes may have been conceived to be family friendly, the women I interviewed recall the consternation of their parents when viewing, and have a clear sense that these programmes were for them as teenage girls, and not for their parents. The relatively greater financial and social freedom that boys have traditionally enjoyed (McRobbie, 2000) means that they possibly did spend more time out of the home enjoying popular culture as teenagers, and as a result possibly did watch less television than girls. But for many younger teenage girls, and particularly for some women from older generations who were likely to be subjected to greater parental supervision, music on television offered their best means of exposure and access to youth cultures, to music, and to fashion.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter I unpicked women's memories of their adolescent enjoyment of pop music programmes. The genre emerged as significant to how they navigated their teenage years and developed their burgeoning identities as women through identification with female presenters such as Cathy McGowan of *The Tube* and Paula Yates of *The Tube*. Ian Ang and Joke Hermes have argued both that there is an absence of theorization about the way gender and popular culture reception are related, and against a research agenda which concentrates on gender and "women's culture" at the expense of other social categories such as ethnicity and class. They suggest that 'any feminist standpoint will necessarily have to present itself as partial, based upon the knowledge that while some women sometimes share some common interests and face some common enemies, such commonalities are by no means universal' (Ang and Hermes, 1991: 324). The issue of how a research question frames the data it creates is an important one, and the additional information I received from male participants demonstrated this well. Without hearing testimony from men about



how important music programmes had been to them it would have been easy to assume that it was a gendered viewing choice. It was not a gendered viewing choice, but there *were* gendered differences in how the programmes were viewed and used. There was also a significant gendered difference in how people talked about and remembered the programmes. If the programmes were important across class and gender, I would suggest that generation and life stage also need to be considered in the study of women's culture. This interview data suggests that at certain points in life, age might actually trump both gender and class as a reason for behaviour.

From my interviews, we can begin to get a clear sense that, within this particular teenage and feminine culture, there are certain ways of being that can give girls an enhanced cultural position amongst their peers, or within the field of teenage girlhood. This is apparent in Fiona's pride at being a 'leader of fashion' among her friends, and also in the way that others recall the importance of the shows in enabling them to know the Top Twenty, to see the "big moments", and to be able to discuss the programmes with their friends.

Yet there is also a sense of identity formation at play here. Within the broader framework of attention to the media's role in identity formation, the relationship with the music programmes discussed here can be seen as a stepping stone in the development of their own gendered identities. If adolescence is the stage of 'identity versus role confusion', during which the child learns the roles she will occupy as an adult, a life stage when adolescents try to find out exactly who she is (Erikson, 1959). They are 'trying on' womanhood and the femininities which they think they might like to inhabit as adult women. and as different to their mothers in the way that their own mothers did before them.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### WOMEN, TELEVISION AND DESIRE

#### *Introduction*

In previous chapters I have noted how the themes of the women's oral histories have often gathered around familial viewing and domestic responsibility. The relational aspect of their viewing and how they use this to depict their identity, their "self-in-relation" (Surrey, 1985) is what has underpinned my conversations with many of the women. Their response to questions about what they have enjoyed watching has typically been to relate what they have watched with others or even by talking about what other people in their lives have enjoyed watching. Rarely has their conversation about the television programmes they watched corresponded to the television that they considered to be "for them". In Chapter Seven, I suggested that women's recollections of the importance of pop music programmes to their teenage years indicated a disruption of this pattern, with a move away from the consideration of television enjoyed with others towards television enjoyed for themselves. This was the one genre that was consistently referenced in terms of their own viewing and as "for them" and how that might reflect upon the period of their lives that they were remembering. Even here, though, a distinct relational aspect to the women's viewing was apparent, with many of the women talking about viewing with bemused parents and with siblings, and also about their associated talk and behaviours after the viewing fact with friends. Despite the relational narrative which emerged, when talking about pop music programmes the women *did* allow themselves to conceive of their own viewing identity and of themselves as individuals. Significantly, when compared to their adult reminiscences, particularly around motherhood as outlined in Chapter Six, this adolescent period can be seen to represent the last period of their lives when they did not have to fulfil a role of domestic responsibility.

Now I turn my attention to another theme that arose from the interviews, in which a number of the women spoke about television that they had enjoyed through the lens of desire; of the men, both as actors and as characters that they had found attractive and took pleasure from watching in those programmes. It is easy to think of television as the "bad object" (Brunsdon, 2008:127), that unsexy, domestic object which prevents human interaction. The idiot box does not seem to lend itself to questions of desire.

In Clarissa Smith's work on women viewing pornography, she notes that the women she spoke to responded to the question 'is this magazine for women?' with responses such as "well, I'm a woman and I liked it, therefore it is for women" or "well, I'm a woman and I didn't like it much, therefore it isn't for women". (Smith, 2007: 80). This is very different to the responses to my question about what constitutes "television for women". None of the women I spoke to made this connection between her own televisual pleasure and what this might mean for its status as "for women". It is significant, therefore, that desire is the one of the few areas where women were enabled to talk about television "for them".

Smith's work, when considered alongside earlier work theorising the cinematic female spectator, reminds us of the significance of different apparatuses of spectatorship to the experience of desire. We are more used to discussing desire in relation to the cinematic experience than to the televisual experience. When the relationship between television and desire *is* tackled it is more likely to be through a textual approach, as with Jane Arthur's work on television and sexuality (Arthurs, 2004), rather than how audiences are reading through the text as my research indicates. On the rare occasions when the audience is consulted, the scope of investigation is often narrowed down to a single text, as in Lyn Thomas' work on the figure of Inspector Morse (Thomas, 1997) exploring pre-existing ideas of who might be an attractive character to a female audience. In this chapter I instead explore women's desire as experienced through the medium of television, considering how theorisations of female spectatorship are, in fact, very specific to different media.

### *Accessing Desire*

The theme of the women's expressions of desire for male actors and television characters was one that I did not notice during the period of research and interviewing. It was not until later during my analysis of the interviews as a whole body of work that I realised it was a theme which occurred in several interviews, albeit not a theme that many lingered upon or drew particular attention to. All of the women I interviewed identified themselves as heterosexual, so this is an expression of heterosexual feminine desire. Additionally, twenty eight out of the thirty women were mothers which, as I have postulated in earlier chapters, creates a very specific relationship with the domestic, particularly in terms of their memories. It was only the women in their 40s, 50s, 60s and early 70s who expressed their television viewing in these terms of desire, whereas the older women in their 80s and 90s did not. This, then, is a very specific

response on desire from a particular group. Interestingly, these are the same age groups who were able to discuss their relationship with pop music programmes as teenagers, again highlighting the differing generational relationship with viewing and talking about television, as well as narrating lives. In Chapter Four, I identified the various factors which cut across the television experience along generational lines. One of these was the extent of each generational cohort's exposure to feminism and when in their socialisation this happened. In terms of their interest in discussing desire, we can see the distinct relationship with feminism created for those women in the younger groups who are enabled to understand themselves as being entitled to desire and to acknowledge this entitlement.

The email and written correspondence I received in response to my original call to interview was more explicit in terms of the enjoyment of watching the masculine body than the oral histories were, particularly in terms of watching the male body in sports programming, with many of my respondents discussing male stars of Wimbledon in these terms. In his work on the male pin up, Richard Dyer demonstrates the many ways that the men in pin up imagery seem to avoid being the "looked at" object and suggests that sport is the area of life that is the most common contemporary source of male imagery, that "the celebration of the body in sport is also a celebration of the relative affluence of Western society, where people have time to dedicate themselves to the development of the body for its own sake" (Dyer, 1982:68). The women who wrote to me did so in those terms identified by Dyer as "masculinity-as-activity" and with an overtly sexual agenda. When I first started to consider the issue, the correspondence and interview work became conflated in my thinking and I thought that there had been a great deal of explicit expression of physical attraction and desire in the interviews themselves. In fact, this type of explicitly sexualised discussion with a concentration on the male body was confined to the initial correspondence and in the very specific context of sport. Dyer's allusion to "celebration" carries a further connotation that this is an "acceptable" environment for women to look at men and the means by which the initial correspondence I received talked about the physicality of the male body in sports programming certainly suggests that this is true. Discursively, however, the theme played out differently, with a more subtle teasing out of the women's thoughts and memories on desire. Desire emerges as a topic that women, at least of certain generations and cultural dispositions, might be embarrassed to discuss and prefer to address it more discreetly in a face to face interview than they do in the more anonymous format of the written word.

As a means of circumventing this problem and to further illuminate the women's feelings on the subject, I contacted seven of the women who had talked about desire in their interviews (Sue E, Sue O, Tracey, Patricia, Jennie, Rachel and Carol) by email. I hoped that the distance that this mode of communication would create between us might produce more detail and stimulate a dialogue which enabled a further articulation of their underlying thoughts on the question of desire and what its specific relationship with television might be. Only three of the women, Sue E, Sue O and Tracey, responded to my emails, and our email discussion unfolded over several weeks. This email correspondence has certainly been useful in pinning down some questions over *why* women looked to television for objects of desire, but has been less successful in terms of eliciting discussion of a more explicit, physical nature as found in the original correspondence. It has also been unsuccessful in pinpointing what it was that women felt they were fulfilling through their televisual desires.

This is indicative of a wider silence around women's desire. In my conversations and email correspondence with women, where desire can be articulated it is in those areas, such as kindness, where it can be legitimated as something other than a physical and sexual desire. This is an extra layer of legitimation, added to an experience that they feel does not have legitimacy in its own right, as Janice Radway noted women applied to their romance reading (Radway, 1991). Let us not forget that only three women responded, and that two of these were the only women in my sample who were not mothers. The women's reticence to go into much detail is evidence of how difficult it is to hold together the two separate subject positions, motherhood and desiring woman, that women are expected to occupy culturally. Increasing fetishisation of the pregnant body, including naked photo shoots of celebrities such as Demi Moore and magazine interest in pregnant celebrities has not translated into questions around the desire *felt* by mothers (Taylor, 2011; Huntley, 2000).

As I noted in Chapter Six, conversation around motherhood quickly became the dominant mode of the interviews. Many of the women exerted their role as "mother" over me, the interviewer, while also taking great pleasure in narrating their memories of motherhood over the period in question. Therefore, when we reached questions of desire during the interview the conversation had already been framed by motherhood, and desire seemed to have had no place within that framework. The email correspondence after the interviews was similarly limited, because by that point my relationship with them as mothers had already been established. The question of

television “for them” is also complicated by this framework. Women who are mothers become facilitators for others comfort and wellbeing, rarely think about their own needs over and above the needs of their dependents (Thompson, 1991). This is why the relative freedom of their adolescent years enables them to talk about pop music programmes as teenagers, but they are unable to offer corresponding television as adults. Two women, Sue E and Sue O, were particularly open around their narrativisation of desire and were among the three women who responded to my email request for more information. Significantly, Sue E and Sue O were the only women in my sample who were not mothers, which is highly suggestive of the fact that they were able to narrate their desire more openly because there was not the same conflict of subject positions.

### *The Female Spectator and The Social Audience*

Much of the existing research on women and desire is predicated upon Laura Mulvey’s formulation of The Male Gaze in her article “Visual pleasure and narrative cinema” (Mulvey, 1975). The viewing processes that Mulvey identified are structured through narrative so that femininity as spectacle becomes encoded into operations of mainstream cinema, forcing the viewer to identify with the male hero and his objectification of the female. Her viewing positions constitute scopophilia (objectification) and narcissism (identification) which become aligned with the binary oppositions of active/passive and masculine/feminine. In Mulvey’s formulation, therefore, woman necessarily becomes the *bearer* of meaning rather than the *maker* of meaning.

Mulvey’s theorisation has since been criticised, revisited and reworked by many, including Mulvey herself (Mulvey, 1981). David Rodowick asks a pertinent question, “her discussion of the female figure is restricted only to its function as masculine object-choice. In this manner, the place of the masculine is discussed as both the subject and the object of the gaze: and the feminine is discussed only as an object which structures the masculine look according to its (active) voyeuristic and (passive) fetishistic forms. So where is the place of the feminine subject in this scenario?” (Rodowick, 1982).

Notable reworkings of Mulvey’s theorisation by, for example, Mary Ann Doane and Raymond Bellour, have sought to find a place for the female spectator. Doane and Bellour have re-theorised Mulvey to indicate the female spectator as transvestite (Doane, 1989) or masochist (Bellour, 1979) respectively, leading to a situation

whereby, as Jackie Stacey witheringly puts it, “The female spectator is offered only the three rather frustrating options of masculinisation, masochism or marginality” (Stacey, 1987:51). However, work on the female gaze carried out by Stacey (1987) and Mary T Conway (1997), for example, which has sought to demonstrate how cinematic texts might be read and enjoyed from different gendered positions has formulated a female gaze based on homosexual impulses and desires. While this approach offers a position in which woman can be both object and subject of a gaze, the object is still, none-the-less, a woman. While trying to re-work the notion of the female gaze, this approach still implicitly denies the possibility of a heterosexual woman objectifying a man. None of these approaches countenance a viewing position which offers a place for heterosexual female desire.

The hegemonic theorisation of the gaze is set up for the apparatus of cinema. In 1988 Suzanne Moore suggest that if we recognise the contradictions between public and private contexts, between the gaze of cinema and the glance of television (Ellis, 1982) we cannot be satisfied with a theory premised on a “unified spectator sitting in a darkened studio” (Moore, 1988:50). In the same publication, Shelagh Young noted how the processes of feminism have contributed to creating a female audience that knows the difference between feeling powerful and feeling powerless. She uses the example of Madonna in the video for her song *Open Your Heart*, returning the fetishist’s gaze and demonstrating that she is in possession of this knowledge to highlight the development of the female viewing position over time (Young, 1988). Both pieces speak clearly to my frustration about how a female spectator who is heterosexual, does her viewing in a private environment and, most saliently, who changes over time cannot be explained by an appropriation of the male gaze. Yet television’s position as a domestic object, and how this plays out in female discussions of viewing desire across space and time has not been further explored in any great detail. Little attention is paid to how far the medium’s status as ‘feminised’, and what this means for its gendered address, might create a different space for feminine desire to that offered by the cinema or, indeed, to that offered by reading.

### *Television and The Gaze*

John Ellis’ early distinctions between cinema and television, that “TV’s regime of vision is less intense than cinema’s: it is a regime of the glance” (Ellis, 1982:132) rather than the overwhelming cinematic gaze, has created a distinction in terms of what those media can do. That is, because cinema has become the medium of “The Male Gaze”

we do not recognise the different space that television creates for desire and the implications that this has for a different Female Gaze. Yet, of course, sexual attraction is part of the fabric of everyday living and television is a completely different apparatus to cinema. Distinctions between television and cinema scholarship also become clear. Despite E Ann Kaplan's warnings about the importance of distinguishing between the hypothetical spectator constructed through film's strategies and the contemporary female viewer with a feminist consciousness (Kaplan, 1983), the spectator is still more frequently inferred in film studies whereas empirical audience studies in the consideration of television are commonplace. Cinematic theorisations leave little space for the female audience. However, while the female television audience has been well accounted for empirically (Hobson, 1982; Press, 1991; Gray, 1992; Seiter, 1999; Wood, 2009), empirical audience work has not engaged specifically with questions around female desire and spectatorship. Work on women and the domestic sphere has tended to look at the structure of woman's domestic day and how the 'rhythms of reception' (Modleski, 1983) fit into the labour of that day. Within such a paradigm, questions of feminine desire have, perhaps, been lost. The domestic positioning of women and the domestication of television and its social function suggests that the medium might play a very different role in feminine desire. In the remainder of this chapter I will illustrate the ways that the women I have spoken to have talked about their televisual objects of lust and the viewing contexts of these attractions during different life stages, and how this indicates a different space for desire to that offered by cinema.

### *Desire On and With Television*

Work on the television/desire/gender nexus often proceeds around questions of representation of female desire in programmes such as *Sex and the City* and *Ally McBeal* with a focus on how a postfeminist climate has created a particular mode of depiction of feminine desires in programming (Kim, 2001; Arthurs, 2003; Ouelette, 2010). Indeed, this work showcases a rather narrow range of programmes representing a very traditionally gendered cross section of viewing choices. Lyn Thomas has criticised much of this type of work, marking out *The Female Gaze* particularly as working too hard to distance itself from the image of "the dungareed dyke" and concentrating on themes of resistance as part of a move to reject earlier, more pessimistic theories of women's relationship to popular culture, as addressed by Laura Mulvey. Thomas instead selected the more gender neutral *Inspector Morse* (ITV, 1987-



2000) for her enquiries. Citing Ann Rosalind Jones' 1986 work on the impact of feminism on contemporary romantic fiction, Thomas concludes that it was Morse's vulnerability that made him attractive to the women she spoke to and that, "Morse's neediness, his constant pursuit of 'attractive 45-year-old women' seems here to be providing the beginnings of a feminist fantasy where female power can be combined with romance." (Thomas, 1997:202-203). Thomas' work is an intriguing stepping off point for further questions around women, television and desire, drawing attention to the breadth of the female viewing experience and highlighting some of the less expected aspects of a character's traits that women might find attractive. However, Thomas also presupposes a feminist consciousness which does not pay adequate attention to the different generational character, and associated access to feminism, that spectatorship might occupy. As I have discussed at length in Chapter Four, media literacy, feminism and a neoliberal sensibility all cut across generation to create significantly different relationships with the medium of television. It is clearly not enough to expect that a unified spectator position can operate across generational lines.

Falling within the television textual analysis tradition, but extending her terms far beyond gender specific-genres, Jane Arthurs focuses more on cultural identity's discursive formation through popular culture (Arthurs, 2004). Arthurs is interested in how portrayals of sexuality can be seen to have resulted from the discursive context in which the programmes have been made and how forms of address regulate sexual subjectivities. What my data indicates, however, is that women do not necessarily look to programmes with a feminine address or which explicitly cater to expectations of women's sexual gratifications. Television offers a range of programming, within a wider flow, that does not have to be sought out. It represents an easy method of accessing desire. This type of representational, textual approach cannot indicate the many ways that an audience, also contrived by the discursive context in which programmes are viewed, makes use of those representations. My own research to some extent indicates how those portrayals and contexts in turn shape women's memories, narratives and language.

Furthermore, while the question of what happens when a male is made to occupy the place of erotic object has been addressed by some (Dyer, 1982; Hansen, 1986), the questions typically seem to focus on how the production process creates this position. Richard Dyer sees the male pin up images that he analysed as the product of curated and heavily produced photo shoots, for example. For Thomas, too, the character of

Morse has, to some extent, been conceived and produced to be attractive to women in the means by which the character from the novels written by Colin Dexter have been made more sympathetic and appealing to women. The question of what happens when the male body in programming which has not been specifically imagined to appeal to women, but has nonetheless been objectified by a female viewer has been largely neglected. Again, the question of where this leaves the heterosexual attraction and desire that women experience during their private, domestic television viewing is not engaged with.

Ros Coward suggests that the failure at the heart of heterosexual desire is that women are not encouraged to find the masculine body physically attractive; that their responses are always regarded as different to male responses and the naked masculine body is seen as 'a laugh' (Coward, 1984). Conversely, Clarissa Smith uses the naked male body in *For Women*, a pornographic magazine addressed to women, as her object of study, noting that women can and do feel and express desire for the male body. The women I spoke to addressed the question of desire in less physical terms. My research focus was not heterosexual female desire for the male body, but the broader aspect of television viewing, hence my data is not about the male naked form. It does, however, highlight the multi-layered experience of desire and how it might have different meanings for different women at different times of their lives. A straight-forward appropriation of the male gaze is not adequate to replicate the multiplicity of the female experience across time and space, and has been simplistically theorised. As Smith has had to re-think Mulvey's cinematic theories on spectatorship in terms of magazine readership, so too must the television researcher. As Annette Kuhn suggests, "...psychoanalysis seems to offer little scope for theorising subjectivity in its cultural or historical specificity" (Kuhn, 1984:21). The social audiences of television (private) and cinema (public) represent two very different types of sociality and, therefore, very different opportunities to the female viewer. So, too, does the different narrative mode of television through series and serialisations.

Glen Creeber uses Horace Newcomb's work on the soap genre as his starting point for understanding why serialisations are so involving, that the 'intimacy' and 'continuity' of the genre allow for "greater audience involvement, a sense of becoming part of the lives and actions of the characters they see" (Newcomb, 1974, quoted in Creeber 2001:442). Creeber goes on to suggest that the television serial provides a wider social and moral context for narrative which allows for exploration of characters, such as DCI

Jane Tennison from *Prime Suspect* (ITV, 1991-2006) as micro- and macro-personal. Annette Kuhn suggests that each medium constructs sexual difference through spectatorship in different ways. Cinema does so through look and spectacle while television, instead, operates through its “capacity to insert its flow, its characteristic modes of address and the textual operations of different kinds of programmes into the rhythms and routines of domestic activities and sexual divisions of labour” (1984:25), which chimes well with how women have spoken to me about their televisual formations of desire. I would also add the issues of television’s familiarity and regularity to this definition.

### *Phases of Desire*

Within the interviews there were two distinct phases of attraction, during which the women across interviews talked about their adolescent crushes and adult pleasures in quite different ways. The division is partly caused by the way I arranged the interview schedule, in which I asked the women to tell me about their television viewing different life stages – childhood, teenage years and adulthood. It is clear that that these phasings have framed the way the women have broken their memories of desire down into stages. However, their discussions of the two phases is so distinct that they must have existed to some extent naturally. Narratives around pop music programming indicated a very particular adolescent “need to belong”. In the data regarding desire, as I will demonstrate here, we can see a similar pattern develop across the conversation about their adolescent attractions. However, their personal preferences and attractions become more individualised as they develop into adult women.

There are also differing generational positions at play in these data. Whilst the oldest women, those in their eighties and nineties, did not talk about desire at all, there were differences between how the two younger groups talked about desire. While both generations were happy to talk about youthful crushes, the women in the middle generational grouping (those in their sixties and seventies) seemed to be the most comfortable with conversation around adult desire whereas the youngest women were more circumspect about this period of desire. These youngest women (in their forties and fifties) still inhabit the day to day role of practical mothering, suggesting that the difficulty of holding together those subject positions that I mentioned earlier, desire and motherhood, might still carry a particular weight.

### *Heart Throb Time!*

The teenage period of desire was characterised by reflections upon “heart throbs”, a phrasing that is very much a cultural product of its time and one which has fallen out of use in more recent years. A dismissive attitude to this stage of their viewing lives was apparent in all the interviews, in this as in many other memories of their adolescent viewing, with the women seeking to distance themselves from the kinds of teenage crushes that they now characterise as adults as having been for silly young things who knew no better. In most cases the subjects of the women’s romantic fantasies were discussed in limited terms beyond naming them and drawing attention to their heart throb status. In some cases the women did not even specify who it was in a programme that they found attractive, merely that the programme had offered something of interest in this way, ‘Oh *The Man From UNCLE!* (BBC, 1965-1969) Heart throb time!’ (Carol, 64). The tone of voice in which Carol delivered her final verdict ‘Heart throb time!’ was particularly mocking, indicative of her dismissive adult attitude. Others drew attention to the vacillations of youthful attraction, again painting this disloyal characteristic to their attractions in a dismissive way;

‘[I always watched] *The Man from Uncle*. I even went to see the film *The Great Escape* (Mirisch Company, 1963) because David McCallum was in it, but came out loving Steve McQueen. Such are teenage crushes.’

Pat, 64

Again, it is Pat’s final words on the matter which deliver her verdict on the foolishness of those teen pursuits from her more knowledgeable position as an adult, and she characterises her adolescent relationship with David McCallum and Steve McQueen as fleeting and somewhat fickle. However, it may not just be her life stage which leads her to dismiss the ‘teenage crush’ in this way. The ‘one off’ experience of viewing in a cinema begins to be represented in opposition to the reliability associated with the quotidian character of television. While Sue O delivers a final, adult delivery of scorn on youthful attractions in relation to a television programme, there is a more committed quality to her memory of watching her heart throb;

‘It certainly enhanced my enjoyment of any programmes if my heart-throbs appeared. More often than not they were my main reasons for wanting to watch the programmes. I couldn’t wait! I remember one, which used to be on ITV on Sunday afternoons. The programme was called *Jungle Boy* (ATV, 1957). I think it was set in Kenya in 1959. The boy who played the lead was called Michael Carr-Hartley. I was 12, and he looked about 3 or 4 years older. He was probably a spotty youth, but I was besotted.’

Sue O, 64, email correspondence

This particular response was to an email I sent her asking how she thought fancying someone in a programme had contributed to her enjoyment of its viewing. Her scorn seems somewhat at odds with the depth of detail of her recollection of the programme. The programme specifics that she relates, suggesting that either she has recalled these details from over fifty years ago and, therefore, that the programme was more important to her than her final comment suggests, or that she has researched it before she responded to me, which suggests that it still holds some fascination for her. What her recollection very clearly indicates is the commitment that she is prepared to devote to watching the object of her desire on television each week.

These were crushes that had necessitated the joining of fan clubs and writing fan letters to magazines, both activities that the women recalled with affectionate ridicule. Sylvia (52), for example, remembered joining the enigmatic Russian spy, Illya Kuryakin played by David McCallum in *The Man From UNCLE*'s fan group, because he was "so gorgeous". These activities had been enjoyable at the time, but were characterised as a somewhat daft behaviour that was best left in the past. The conversation around these teenage crushes was accompanied with wry smiles, rolled eyes and shaken heads. As with many of the women's talk about pop music programmes in Chapter Seven, we see an intimation of the way that women are "wearing knowledge" (Straw, 1997) that they have gained as adults to reflect upon their past selves. They have acquired a greater understanding of the world and of themselves which allows them to look back on their adolescent crushes with a mixture of scorn and affection.

In her work on teen idols, Gael Sweeney has noted how teenage girls select sexually unthreatening idols during this life stage before moving on to men who display a more overt masculinity in adulthood (Sweeney, 1994). What is notable about the men named as adolescent objects of attraction during my interviews is how often they diverge from this status as sexually unthreatening. Here, for example, Rachel lists some of the men she found attractive during her teen years;

'I fancied lots of TV stars starting with Robert Shaw in *The Buccaneers*, Clint Eastwood in *Rawhide*, *Bronco Lane*, the tall dark guy in *Compact*, *Doctor Kildare* and the leads in *Hawaii Five O* and *77 Sunset Strip*.'

Rachel (68)

These are not men who fulfil the unthreatening role of, say, a cheeky Davy Jones in *The Monkees* (BBC, 1967-1968) who was also name-checked several times as a teen pin up.

In the previous chapter I drew attention to the role that television played in women managing their adolescence, and there is a different element of managing at play here. Many of the women complained about having to watch Westerns or sport because their fathers insisted that was what the family would view when they were younger. Despite their dislike of such programmes, it is striking how many of their heart throbs from that period were found in those programmes. I suspect an element of finding and creating something to enjoy in the programme to make its inevitable weekly viewing more palatable. Women recall finding objects of attraction in all types of programming, not just “women’s programmes”.

Tracey also indicates the multiplicity of the nature of her crushes during this period of her life;

‘I used to love watching [*Top of the Pops* (BBC, 1964-2006)] for David Cassidy and David Essex. All of those. But then I discovered David Bowie, and he had my heart forever.’

Tracey (50)

Like Rachel, Tracey was attracted to a range of idols. While David Cassidy can be seen to comfortably fill the role of sexually unthreatening, parent-pleasing heart throb, neither David Essex nor David Bowie could be described as “sexually unthreatening” despite working to disrupt gender and social norms through their public performances of themselves. These adolescent memories begin to point to the diversity of heterosexual female desire. Rachel’s memory makes me question how far the “tough” and overt masculinity of many of her figures of desire is, in fact, counteracted by the regularity and “wallpaper” status of series and serialisations. The issues of intimacy addressed by Horace Newcomb and Glen Creeber, engendered by the familiarity and regularity of teenage girl’s interaction with these overtly masculine men alters their teenage perceptions of what is threatening and unthreatening. These are overtly masculine men, but in the safety of the domestic context they are made safe by their familiar presence on television. That is, the regularity and associated intimacy of such programming stimulates a relational viewing experience with the characters *on television* as well as with those in the room watching television with her.

#### *Adult Pleasures*

Viewing pleasures around desire continued into adulthood. However, as they narrated their older years the women began to describe the men they had been attracted to in

quite different terms to those they had employed for the men they had been attracted to as teenager. The names that arose in conversation of adolescent desire represented a fairly standardised handful of names of men given prominence in girl's magazines and fostering a feeling of belonging and of operating in the field of teenage girlhood that I outlined in Chapter Seven. Significantly, as older women, the names given to me became much more diverse and diffuse. The qualities that the women related as attractive male assets also expanded considerably. Discussion of teen heart throbs had often been quite brief. In the adult memory work around the subject there is more consideration of why these men were attractive. Helen Taylor's work on the film *Gone With The Wind* (MGM/Selznick International Pictures, 1939) identifies Rhett Butler as a continuation of the stock romantic hero of Victorian melodrama, the reformed rake or misunderstood idealist, and Clark Gable's portrayal of him as tangibly physical and overtly masculine (Taylor, 1989). The women she was in contact with found all these elements of Rhett's character extremely attractive. In my interviews there is certainly some conversation along these lines, with characters who conform to this image such as Richard Chamberlain's tortured priest Ralph de Bricassart in *The Thorn Birds* (ABC, 1983) and, indeed, male heroic characters from many literary adaptations such as Colin Firth's Mr Darcy from *Pride and Prejudice* (BBC, 1995) being invoked in several interviews.

It is easy to assume that we will always identify with the heroes, such as de Bricassart or Mr Darcy, and more active aspects of masculinity. In fact, the picture that emerges from my interviews is one in which women are just as likely to identify with the side-kicks or anti-hero as with the hero, moving on from a position of purely physical attraction to other qualities that might be more desirable in a long term partner. Characters and actors are identified as desirable for displaying characteristics such as "loveliness", "kindness", "strength" and "capability", all of which are invoked at different times in different interviews. A much more marked conflation between character and actor also begins to emerge.

Jenny (53), for example, talks here about a man and character that many might find an unusual choice as a figure of desire;

Jenny: I love Lewis. I love Kevin Whately. I remember actually I came to – Kevin Whately was in a play here once and...I remember asking a question at one of those question and answer things after the play, and he said "oh that's a very good question". And I kind of had this thing of "Ooh, Kevin Whately thought I asked a very good question".

Me: Yeah, yeah.

Jenny: And so I kind of...I do find comfort in some of those well-known characters. There's something very nice about them, and I feel quite sort of warm and cuddly. Not because...I obviously know they're not real. I'm not that delusional [HC laughs] but I kind of...there's something comforting. You know what they're going to find amusing, you know what they're going, how their character...there's some familiarity.

Here Jenny explicitly recognises how television series enables a different viewing relationship with characters on television. The regularity of television encounters allows the audience to "know" the characters on some level. This is not just a question of looking, watching, or gazing, but of knowing. She also begins to conflate the character, Lewis, and actor, Kevin Whateley. Where her attraction begins and where it ends is not clear. At a later point in the interview, Jenny returned to talking about Kevin Whateley referencing his kindness as one of his most attractive features and being a reason she particularly liked him;

'But I think someone like Kevin Whateley comes across as quite a genuine kind person in real life. And I like that. And he's talked about – cos I used to work for an organisation called The Carer Centre, where I was working with people who were looking after relatives who were disabled. And he's talked about his mum, I think it is. Who's got Alzeheimers. And he's quite sort of active in getting funds for Alzheimers societies and things like that. So I quite like seeing the human side of a person and seeing that they're actually dealing with something that's like the rest of us.'

Jenny (53)

On one hand, Kevin Whateley is an extremely unlikely pin up. It is reasonable to assume that he was never going to appear in Richard Dyer's piece on the male pin up, steadfastly refusing the objectifying gaze. However, within Jenny's broader life narrative, in which she also recounted details of a physically and verbally abusive first marriage, her need to find "kindness" more attractive or desirable than physical strength or beauty becomes much more understandable. Television's role as an agent for comfort and intimacy again emerge as central to the female viewing experience.

The relationship is not entirely about comfort and intimacy, however. The women's narratives around their adult fancies also reveal a more explicit suggestion of looking at men in a sexualised way than their adolescent recollections did. As Patricia puts it;

'Oh God! That lovely Richard Beckinsale. Yes...Bless him. And to have died so young. Yes, so yes I watched that [*Porridge* (BBC1, 1974-1977)]. And did I watch it for the content? No, probably not. I watched it to look at him. How shallow is that? He was lovely.'



Patricia (64)

Patricia's memory of Richard Beckinsale is of him as spectacle, with her choice of words a definite assertion that she was looking at him. Her gaze is "active" (Mulvey, 1975) and lingering. Patricia made Beckinsale bear the full weight of her look. Sue E also addresses the sexualised nature of her relationship with the male characters in *The Sweeney* (ITV, 1975-1978);

'*The Sweeney*. I have *The Sweeney* as my ring tone now. Well I was in love with John Thaw obviously. Um...there is a diary entry that says something like "I've been having fantasies about Regan and Carter three times a week".'

Sue E (60)

As well as providing a different perspective on gendered looking, Patricia and Sue E's recollections also provide a different context for the hegemonic idea of the television glance (Ellis, 1982). It is clear from their comments that television is not always to be glanced at. Sue E does not recall passively glance at Carter and Regan, played by John Thaw and Dennis Waterman, but instead recounts how she took her enjoyment of watching them through the rest of her week. This is precisely what the apparatus of television offers that cinema cannot. Sue E does not have to glance at Carter and Regan, because this is a different commitment that has been built up over time. Germaine Greer has suggested that boyhood is on the cusp between masculine and feminine worlds, that "the boy is the missing term in the discussion of the possibility of the female gaze" (Greer, 2003). Her conclusion is that women are not attracted to excessively masculine men. In my data, where the conversations around desire happened quite organically, a much more complicated picture emerges. Women are not just attracted to the "feminised" boy but to a whole multitude of types of men, each of whom perhaps offer different parts of her ideal man. This is best demonstrated by Tracey, who responded to the first of my emails about her attraction to men on television with this list;

Steve Hodson in *Follyfoot Farm*, Frazer Hines, he was Jamie in *Doctor Who*, Robert Powell in *Harlequin* and *Jesus of Nazareth*, Adam Faith in *Budgie*, Robert Hoffman in that French black and white 1965 series, *The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*. David Cassidy in *The Partridge Family*, Leigh Lawson in *Travelling Man* – still gorgeous but happily married to Twiggy for years. Davy Jones from *The Monkees*. He sadly passed away last year. There was Richard O'Sullivan in *Man About The House*, but I didn't reckon much of *Robin's Nest*, though. Martin Shaw and Lewis Collins from *The Professionals*, John Thaw in *The Sweeney*, Pete Duel and Ben Murphy...that was *Alias Smith and Jones*. Um...Simon Williams, Captain James Bellamy in the original *Upstairs Downstairs*, Frank Finlay and James Aubrey from *Bouquet of Barbed Wire*, Anthony Hopkins from *A Married*

*Man*, Philip Madoc, Roy Marsden in *The Sandbaggers*. They were most certainly the best reason for watching these shows. Their looks or charisma as an actor. You'll notice some of them weren't necessarily young and beautiful, but charisma was paramount. The dashing characters they played enhanced that to some degree, but it wasn't all about the heroics for me.

Tracey (50), Email correspondence

Tracey's response perfectly encapsulates how often she watched television and found herself attracted to the men she saw, how different her objects of attraction were and what her different motivations for being attracted to those men might be. The number of men listed by Tracey reflects the experience of television as more than one text, but instead of a flow. Her adult sensibility, influenced by her exposure to a society which included a visible feminism from childhood, "allows" her to desire in this way.

Like Tracey, several other women admitted to enjoying a number of men on television, but a certain type of brand loyalty was also evident in both adolescent and adult phases of desire. Many of the women noted that would watch everything that certain male actors appeared in, and that sometimes he was the only reason they watched it at all;

'Patrick Mower...He was in a serial in the early Eighties called [*The*] *Dark Side of the Sun* (BBC, 1983). A whole six part serial. Unfortunately I missed some, because that was before we had our video and that was on a specific night of the week and we went out for two or three of them. But I did see that serial and I thought, yeah definitely dishy. So I...um, definitely used to like seeing anything that had him in it, after that.'

Sue O, (64)

This is another very clear intimation that the men are being looked at and that it is women who are doing the looking.

The women I talked to do certainly move on from an adolescent position to a different adult fascination but, again, it is much more complicated than that change suggested by Sweeney. Rather than moving from a position of "feminised and unthreatening" idol to "masculine and active" adult pleasure, their expectations of "masculinity" in fact varied greatly. Women are not looking for objects of desire to the same programmes or men as one homogenous group. While the women do all identify different facets of male television stars as desirable their use of television stars in this way possibly stem from a similar need as described here by Sue E;

'Probably Roger Moore, Patrick McGoohan and, later, John Thaw. That starting with *Redcap* (ABC, 1964-1966). They were my chief fancies. They were British - I

don't remember having American heroes - and rather sophisticated yet good at the action stuff. In other words, unlike any of the male species I'd yet come across in real life. That was the attraction I think.'

Sue E (60), Email

These television men offer escapism, something different to their real lives in terms of fantasy and wish fulfilment. For younger women their television fancies offered an opportunity to fantasise about the perceived excitement of adulthood, for older women who were acutely aware of just how unexciting adulthood could be, the chance to fantasise about the type of men missing from their very real lives.

As with Radway's research on female romantic fiction readers, the women's oral histories gathered here point to the importance of television to women's self-care. Radway uses Nancy Chodorow's psychoanalytical formations of gender to present her sample as women who are "servicers"; women who are seen as naturally nurturing and expected to perform the task of supporting family without being formally "reproduced" or supported themselves (Chodorow, 1994). For Radway, the women's use of romantic fiction is a means of attending to their requirement for emotional sustenance and personal space. In Chapter Six I indicated the comforting and intimate function of television for women who are mothers and with domestic responsibility for which Radway's work was a useful framework. The way the women I interviewed have spoken to me about their objects of desire on television gives the sense that they are not so much creating space and time for themselves within the domestic schedule as carving out a specific enjoyment within a number of programmes as well as fulfilling a fantasy need which is not catered for in their real lives. The television series during this period offered something to look forward to each week.

Clarissa Smith has taken up Julie Burchill's criticism that popular culture tends to represent sex for women as "sex for the sex-less" (Burchill, 2000) whereby it is dressed up as a form of self-care and, therefore, not really sex. Smith reminds us that in her own study, women were interested in *For Women* magazine for its transformative possibilities and the importance of fantasy to female readers.

"The magazine enables readers' imaginative contemplations of sex without the risks and problems of male violence, coercion, physical, emotional and mental pressures. For others, the magazine also allows the sidestepping of social restrictions, of models of good behaviour, morality, dangers of sex, fear of disease and pregnancy. It enables moving outside of those injunctions that women don't do this, men can't let go, men will simply use you and throw you away." (Smith, 2007:225-226)

Birchall's conclusion sanitises the notion of "self-care" and ignores the validity of fantasy. In fact, desire is about more than sex alone (Coward, 1984), and it represents different things at different life stages. In this sense of comfort and escapism we can see echoes of Janice Radway's work on women reading romantic fiction. The transportive and escapist element of appointment viewing of men on television, a fantasy appointment which offers something different to the men around them in the real world has been important to both adolescence and adulthood. Television offers, as Dorothy Hobson has noted, an emotive connection with fiction which offers an alternative to daily life (Hobson, 1980). During adolescence the fantasies offered a hint of the excitement of adulthood. During adulthood television men offered an alternative to the men that the women felt they encountered in real life.

### *Conclusion*

The domestic should be seen as different space for attraction and desire to be played out, and television's position in the domestic creates a different viewing experience to that of the cinema. Ultimately, the everydayness of television does not seem to lend itself to questions of desire at all, but the conversation about men and their importance to the enjoyment of certain programmes that arose from my interviews suggests that the question of television's role in heterosexual female desire does need to be visited.

The types of men and programming that the women remember feeling attraction towards are varied, but typically emerge from family viewing as do the majority of the women's viewing memories. As I showed in Chapter Six, this is partly due to how memory works and the gendered aspect to how we might recall something so commonplace as television. Its situation within the domestic makes it pivotal to moments of familial intimacy, echoing Susan Geiger's suggestion that women's embeddedness in familial life may shape their view of the world and consciousness of historical time (Geiger, 1986). Here I carried out a series of oral history interviews with a group of women who generally struggled to recall the specifics of past television programming that might have resonated with them, instead remembering the domestic and familial contexts of that viewing. Yet, the same women had no such problem remembering those programmes which featured actors and characters that they had been attracted to and who had stimulated desire. That is, the difficulties of recollection were diminished by the presence of a heart throb. Here we begin to see the construction of a heterosexual woman's TV canon, not entirely comprised of the programmes that we might normally consider to be "for women", through desire. So

while costume drama and other dramas are represented, we also see programmes such as the 'gritty' *The Sweeney*, a variety of Westerns and Sports programmes.

Television's domestic context, however, offers it as an object of comfort as well as escapism. The narrative possibilities of the television series and serialisation (Newcomb, 1974; Creeber, 2001) lend themselves to long term, ongoing relationships with television programmes and characters. These are television pleasures which offer comfort in terms of their reliability and regularity and ease of access. Programming is scheduled each week for a certain day and time. Aside from turning the television on at the right time or setting the video recorder, the relationship with television programmes requires commitment, but little in the way of extraordinary effort. The characters in those programmes become familiar and comforting through their regular appearance.

These memories around looking at men through the medium of television contest hegemonic theories around female heterosexual spectatorship and desire, but also ideas around the differences in looking at the apparatuses of cinema and television. The differences between cinema and television, the different ways we invest in watching and not watching, but also how we invest over time create different relationships between the viewer and what is on the screen. These oral histories indicate here that not all television viewing is about "the glance" and that audiences can and do invest television spectatorship with a more considered and concentrated gaze, just as they might at the cinema. What is different, what television offers that cinema does not is a particular type of feminine viewing pleasure. The way the women spoke to me about the regularity and familiarity of the attractive men in television programming is more redolent of a long term relationship, one which offers comfort in its familiarity and which requires little extra effort, versus the nerve racking and potentially one-off first date implied by the cinematic experience.

## CONCLUSION

As I noted in the Introduction, the significance of my audience research to the project “A History of Television for Women in Britain, 1947-1989” lay in giving voice to ‘real’ women in the construction of ‘their’ history, while also capturing the memories of those older members of the historical audience for women’s television before they disappear. Specific research questions were, at the outset, quite nebulous with the method adhering more to Janice Radway’s approach in letting the interview findings drive the research focus, rather than approaching the interviews with an explicit idea of what the outcome would be (Radway, 1984). Although anticipation of what might emerge from the interviews was largely unformed, certain expectations did exist. Firstly, I hoped that this oral history approach would uncover those programmes which a female audience felt had resonated with them and why it was those programmes which particularly struck a chord with them. Secondly, the project wanted to learn more about women’s relationship with television over time. As a category for analysis, generation was a central means to unpicking this history.

### *Generation*

While the interviews have been less successful at highlighting significant programmes which could be seen to have a specific address to women and which they felt a resulting resonance with, the generational focus of my research was more successfully realised. Work which seeks out the historical viewing audience is scant, but my research indicates seems to agree with several of the findings of that research which exists. Like Andrea Press’ work on gender and generation in the US television viewing context (Press, 1991) and Rachel Moseley’s work on different generational audiences of Audrey Hepburn films (Moseley, 2002), my research indicates the changes wrought by feminist discourses upon how audiences of different generations discuss their viewing experiences, both in terms of how they reflect and discuss their viewing and also their attitudes to television and the wider world. Pierre Bourdieu’s work on cultural reproduction traces how existing class based cultural values and norms are transmitted from generation to generation. Psychoanalytical consideration of the reproduction around ideas of motherhood and the female role in the domestic space is well attended to (Chodorow, 1978, Ruddick, 1982; Rosner, 1999). Empirical work has not traditionally engaged with this subject, but in my data we can see how this reproduction exists. The similarities that emerged between women of different generations in terms of what

they expect of their feminine, domestic role and the value that they ascribe to motherhood are transmitted cultural values which remain constant across a period of forty years. Yet Bourdieu's suggestion that generational struggle exist and have significance in relation to intellectual change and conflict between generations for ownership of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1993), is also played out in my data.

Andrea Press highlights a differential exposure to television as an institution as one of the factors that can influence divergent generational responses to the medium, along with exposure to the women's movement and at what point this occurs in the life course (Press, 1991). In the Review of Literature in Chapter Two, I drew attention to Richard Butsch's warning on the danger of perceiving audiences as static when, in fact, they vary in identity over time and location and his suggestion that it is through reception responses to television programmes that we can trace changes over time and recognise audience diversity. That the seemingly unremarkable viewed over a period of time through the eyes of the audience will illuminate important shifts in attitude of the addressed and changes in the address of the medium (Butsch, 2003). The "moment in time" studies that I have often referred to throughout this thesis can sometimes create temporally static ideas around audience behaviour. Butsch's approach is key to my approach, which indicates that audience do indeed change in both significant and subtle ways over time and across generations. Across this thesis I have discussed women's memories of everyday and "ordinary" (Bonner, 2003) television viewing, and it has often been the case that I have drawn attention to generational differences which have typically applied to women in their forties and fifties, in their sixties and seventies and their eighties and nineties. As such, three clear and distinct groupings have emerged in terms of the ways women spoke about television, largely predicated to the extent to which television represented a 'technological intervention' in their lives (Press, 1991). However, these various phases can also be seen to correspond to broader social and cultural changes, such as the development of the women's movement and the emergence of consumer culture. I outline my typography of generational television viewing positions below, using these labels to summarise the arguments and findings made in this thesis.

#### *Habituated Generation*

The youngest women, those in their forties and fifties, were born into a world where television was the norm, a major social force. For them, the medium did not form any kind of technological intervention into their lives and they do not remember a world

before television. The label “Habituated” is quite self-explanatory, indicating a generation who are entirely accustomed not only to the medium of television, but also its place in their lives. The women of this generational grouping were born into a world where television was more available, with both BBC channels and ITV available to view and Channel 4 appearing during their teens or early twenties. Following on from this expectation of choice, they have been adults during what John Ellis describes as the “era of plenty” (Ellis, 2000).

Women of the Habituated generation spoke about their lives in surprisingly similar terms to their older counterparts, with the importance of domestic responsibility and family viewing both as children and with children forming the cornerstone of their memories. Most women recognised the ongoing gender positions of viewing and admitted that they ceded power over viewing to their children and partners. However, what really gives this generational grouping its own specific personality is how they talk about television and its position in their lives. These women came to second wave feminism as a fully conceived movement, rather than one that was under creation, and the women in the Habituated group exhibit strong post-feminist connections, albeit with a more affirmative understanding of feminism than is, perhaps, more typically associated with the post-feminist discourses understood by younger women who, perhaps, view feminism’s work as over (Douglas, 2010). Members of this generation are the most fully realised feminists of all my age groups, with certain facets of the feminist movement being accepted as the norm. They were also the only generation to flex their muscles by critiquing many aspects of the second wave feminist movement, particularly in terms of the movement’s perceived denigration of more traditional feminine choices such as being a stay at home mother.

Rosalind Gill points to the move from objectivity to subjectivity in post-feminist media culture, indicating the way in which neoliberalism constructs individuals as ‘entrepreneurial actors who are rational, calculating and self-regulating’, highlighting the increased importance of work upon ‘self’ and governance of ‘oneself’ as a subject; the neoliberal subject must use what they have to get ahead (Gill, 2007). In the younger women’s television memories we can see the historical point where ideas of neoliberalism and feminism meet to create this form of reflexivity around television and self, demonstrating a set of skills which the women of this cohort were keen to employ, as with Dawn’s thoughts on *The Tube* “opening up” different possible futures for her. Rachel Moseley described her sample of younger, post-feminist women as similarly



more media aware, deconstructive and analytical, noting the critical distance which characterised their discussion, suggesting that this is a pattern which exists beyond my own interview data. Further, among the youngest women in my sample, level of education did not appear to be a factor in their ability to employ reflexive conversation on “self” and on that self’s interaction with television, suggesting that this skill is not only a product of education but also of generational experience. The difference in tastes and value between working class women of this generation and their older counterparts was also marked. Dawn, for example, marked herself out as a cultural omnivore rather than reverting to more traditional middle class values around legitimate cultural forms (Bourdieu, 1984; Seiter, 1990). This highlights the generational shifts in understanding of quality and taste that occur.

Their position as neo-liberal subject aligned with their absorption of the feminist message enables them to narrate their “self” as in their conversation around music programmes and what this meant to their identity as an individual. Women in this age group’s conversation around BBC1’s *Top of the Pops* and Channel 4’s music show *The Tube* indicates pop music’s importance not only in terms of access to music and youth culture, but also to role models in the very feminine presence of presenter Paula Yates. Their teenage identification with Yates fits well with Erik Erikson’s label “Adolescence” (identity versus role confusion) and “Early Adulthood” (intimacy versus isolation). This period for these youngest women was characterised by an absence of television viewing and domestic memories, with many women noting that during this period they were busy with homework, careers, household chores and social lives. Additionally, these youngest women were empowered by this combination of factors to see themselves as deserving of a sexual identity and entitled to feel and express desire in a way that the oldest women were not. Jenny, for example, was happy to admit to the attraction they felt to television actors and characters such as Kevin Whately/Lewis and Tracey provided a long list of different men she had found attractive over her television viewing career. More than anything, the habituated generation were most able to recognise and narrate their mediated identities.

### *Enchanted Generation*

The middle generational grouping comprises women who are now in their sixties and seventies. These women do remember a life before television, but the intervention of the technology occurred in their lives during childhood or their early teens. As such, the appearance of television was typically described during the interviews as something

that was 'magical' or 'enchanted', and which at the same time was also easily adopted into their existing lifestyles and understanding of the world. It is this enchantment that accounts for the label I have applied here. This generational grouping's relationship with television is characterised by affection for the medium, with most of the women of this age group describing the medium in positive terms compared with the more negative feelings expressed by those women who were older. Many of their narratives of earliest memories dealt with the excitement of returning home from school to see an aerial on the roof or with feelings of envy for those who already had a television set when they did not. Significantly, more women in their sixties responded to my call to interview and expressing a desire to be interviewed than any other age group suggesting that women of this age group felt that my advert, which asked if television had been important in their lives, particularly called to them. These women were enchanted by television as children, and their adult viewing roughly equates to what John Ellis terms "the era of availability" (Ellis 2000), fostered by the creation of more channels and characterized by a proliferation of choice. This process has led to what Ellis terms a 'diffuse and extensive process of working through', which is seen in the women of this generational grouping constantly worrying over modern children's exposure to television among other things.

The Enchanted generation's period of adolescent socialisation and identity foundation occurred in the late 1950s through to the early 1970s, during a period of active second wave feminism. For women of this generation, feminist ideas form part of their understanding of their world and of television. They recognised the gendered aspect of the power struggles over viewing and related their coping strategies and managing techniques that they enacted to protect their own viewing, including marking up their copy of the TV Times, recording programmes and setting up second television sets. This group acts as a significant bridge between those groups that Press and Moseley have investigated and have termed pre- and post-feminist. They share similarities with the Habituated generation in that the influences of feminism can be seen in their recognition of "self" in their talk and engagement with questions of identity around pop music programmes and also in their talk of desire. Again, the intersection of their generational position with feminism enables them to recognise themselves as entitled to these identities. However, in their attitude to the medium of television and the language they employ to talk about it they share more with those women in the older generation.

In terms of taste, the Enchanted generation also shared more with older women than with the Habituated generation. Lynda and Belinda, for example, demonstrated a recourse to traditional legitimate tastes and middle class values in their interviews. They portrayed themselves as enjoying heavy weight political programming and highbrow drama. For the Enchanted generation, Television is a useful part of life, but it is not valuable or significant, and they are not so eager to recognise its role in their own identity formation. In this respect, this generational grouping is useful for demonstrating that it is not only exposure to the women's movement which might create diverging attitudes to television, but where feminism collides with other cultural factors.

### *Adopter Generation*

This grouping is inhabited by the oldest women in my sample, those in their late seventies through to their nineties. I have not chosen the label "Adopter" because of its association with the phrase "Early Adopter" which connotes those who are keen to take up new technologies as soon as they are available. This does not adequately signify many of the older women's relationship with the technology of television which was, in many cases, more halting and suspicious. The term "Adopter" here instead signifies the taking in of something foreign and unknown, which seems to occupy a place in one's life without being fully understood. This seems to more adequately suggest not only the older women's attitudes upon taking the medium into their homes in the first place, but is also a good descriptor of their more detached ongoing relationship with television when compared to the younger women in my sample.

These women were actively involved in the acquisition of their first television set as older teenagers or, more usually, adult women in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s and the technology of the medium is central to their earliest memories of watching television. They missed the opportunity to watch television as children, and their adult viewing was incubated in what John Ellis calls 'the era of scarcity' (Ellis, 2000). Ellis characterises this as the phase of the development of public service broadcasting, which coincided with and promoted a standardised mass market consumerism. It was a period when audiences were "watching as households rather than as individuals; an audience using sets with (by current standards) fuzzy, low-definition images and poor sound quality; an audience for whom television was revealing the look, the potential and the diversity of their society in a way that radio and cinema had not done previously." (Ellis, 2004:24). In many cases, the Adopters were married and involved in an on-going process of negotiation with male partners around affordability and

desirability of purchasing a set. For these women the arrival of television represented a significant “technological intervention” in their adult lives.

For the women in this generational group, the second wave feminist movement was not a central part of their lives although the messages of this feminism have filtered into their consciousness. In narrating their pasts, they project some feminist ideas back on to their family lives and domestic gendered power relations, but these ideas are often understood and articulated at a very basic, and often contradictory, level. In this sense, the Adopter women correspond to the ‘pre-feminist’ groupings used by Andrea Press and Rachel Moseley.

In significant ways, the women of this cohort are less reflexive in their talk of self than their younger counterparts and have greater difficulty establishing a critical distance from television. Their understanding of terms such as ‘role model’ is slight and they credit television with little value. These women’s period of socialisation, that of the identity phase of adolescence (Erikson, 1959) took place before the intervention of television, often seen to be an agent of neoliberalism (Miller, 2007). Celia Lury suggests that “[c]onsumer culture provides a specific context for the development of novel relationships between self-identity and group membership, and that this context is interpreted, reflexively, in various ways by different social groups” (Lury, 2011: 215). The neo-liberal subject has enabled me to make sense of the youngest generation’s ability to speak in the interview encounter, which begs a question about the history is that precludes the older women from doing so. The women of the Adopter generation narrate a history where larger institutions such as the state played a greater role in identity, through which subjectivity is determined through how one is subject to them and fixed rather than through consumption which encourages a reflexivity and a shifting sense of identity. This earlier pre-feminist, pre-consumer culture history may explain the Adopter generation’s lack of articulation around television.

These women were less likely to acknowledge that television had had importance to them during my period of study, but were more likely to acknowledge the medium as a comfort and company in their current lives which, in several cases, were lived alone due to widowhood and children who had long since left home to have their own families. Yet they also employed a great deal of nostalgia in their narratives for what television once was. Despite downplaying the importance of television in their lives between 1947 and 1989, they were also adamant that television now is not as good as

it used to be, resulting in a strange marriage of affectionate nostalgia for a medium that they largely spent the interviews disparaging

Throughout this thesis I often seem to talk of these women as the outliers of themes. They did not talk about pop music as culturally significant to adolescence because they were older than this when they first got television, but also because the women of this generation found it difficult to understand television's significance to their cultural lives, often slipping in to talking about other leisure pursuits which they had engaged in and ascribed greater cultural value to, such as attending dance halls, the cinema and the theatre. Similarly, the Adopters did not talk about desiring the men that they watched on television. I can only speculate as to why this might be, but again the role of feminism appears to be a factor.

### *Canons*

Brett Mills draws attention to the type of programming that he calls "invisible television" (Mills, 2010) which he characterises as the television which receives large viewing figures, but does not get written about by academics. He refers to programmes such as Top Gear, New Tricks all regularly receive large audience figures, and these are the types of everyday television that the women in this study related. Yet this does not translate into academic interest. Mills addresses the problems inherent in academic canon construction which ignores this vast swathe of everyday, ordinary television which does not receive attention. He worries about what will happen to the field of Television Studies in the future if the canons formed now relate only to the programmes that current scholar's enjoy or find interesting.

The interview data gathered for the purpose of this research did not, as I mentioned previously, fulfil the expectations of the project in terms of addressing women's relationship with "television for women". On one level, the project expected to construct a canon of women's television through archive and audience research. The difference between the programmes that emerged from my interviews compared with many of the early programmes that Mary Irwin found through the archives was startling. The women I spoke to did not reference arts programmes and paid little attention to magazine programmes, early or otherwise. When the relationship between archive and audience

is viewed in reverse, the significance of pop music programmes to women's lives, for example, might not have emerged at all if the project had proceeded with a purely archival approach. This raises a number of questions in relation to academic canons and the ways that they are constructed. When academics construct canons around scholarly ideas and their own specific interests, and then use those canons to direct their route into the archive, this type of cultural interaction with the medium is lost. My own research indicates that the various generations do not have particularly different canons but that they speak about them differently. My method invites this cultural investment as it relies upon a narrative construction of the relationship between television and self. This is the type of cultural investment that cannot be found in archival research that is directed by academically constructed ideas of canon. This research particularly reminds us of the importance of including the audience voice in television history, because without it there is a danger of reproducing industrial histories which leave out the texts which are relevant to outlying groups such as women.

### *Wallpaper*

One of the most striking aspects of how women of all ages spoke to me is in the contradiction of attitudes apparent in many interviews. The refrain "I'm not a typical woman" is a frequent and deliberatist performance, in which women seek on one hand to distance themselves from cultural associations with femininity, such as soap operas and other television which many characterise as low status, while on the other hand gather up perhaps the most "typical" position as a woman, that of "mother", as their source of value. This begs questions around what is it in society that does not give value to feminine culture, but valorises motherhood as the "acceptable" female subject position. It is striking, too, how far the women have internalised the idea of a 'typical woman'. Much scholarship is concerned with resisting the essentialisation of the category of woman, and yet the 'real' women that I have spoken to have a clear expectation of an essentialised and 'typical' female subject. This expectation creates an identity category which they seek to deny, viewing it as ultimately empty and valueless. Additionally, questions around women's domestic responsibility and men's ongoing power over what is and is not watched (Gray, 1992; Morley, 1986) continue to emerge as constant factors in the domestic organisation of heterosexual family homes. The generational categories I have identified indicate distinct generational television

viewing positions and mediated identities, but they also demonstrate the sad truth that the experience of being a woman has remained largely unchanged over time.

The domestic and familial contexts of viewing were what underpinned the women's memories. It was these aspects of viewing that women of all generations wanted to talk about and what they imbued with resonance and significance over specific texts. In this, the women's memories of viewing corresponded with previous, ethnographic studies which also focussed on contexts of viewing over texts (Lull, 1980; Morley, 1986). The women's narratives of television viewing had a strong relational focus, and were intertwined with their narratives of motherhood and family, speaking strongly of women's domestic emotional labour and the resonance that is inflected therein. In some sense these types of memories broadly correspond with Jerome Bourdon's 'wallpaper' metaphor (2003) in that they appear to relegate television to the backdrop as the life story and relationship themselves take stage. Bourdon suggests that 'wallpaper' memories are somehow less satisfactory than others since "those memories often emerge with the help of the stimulus of program magazines, apparently because they are dormant and less emotional than the rest" (Bourdon, 2003:13). In fact, this was not the case in my own interviews and I would suggest that this is an area where gendered relationships to the past can be seen to differ both in terms of the ease of recollection and of the loading of emotion (Collie, 2013). Those instances where women chose to talk about specific texts and genres were often stimulated by memories of the context of viewing rather than by a personal and individual response to the texts themselves. Sports programming was, in some respects, a surprising place to find 'resonance' in some women's interviews. However, the contextualising conversation around sports programmes indicated that it was often the act of sharing the programme with a male relative, rather than the programme itself, which carried significance for the women. The women's talk reflected not only their commitment to the domestic sphere and their emotional investment within it, but also the value which they ascribed to this work in their role as "kin-keepers" (Oliveri and Reiss, 1987). Television's situation within the domestic space makes it pivotal to moments of familial intimacy, echoing Susan Geiger's suggestion that women's embeddedness in familial life may shape their view of the world and consciousness of historical time. What they narrated was television's role in their labour and effort in maintaining family ties. Recounting their television viewing to me through the relational filter which many applied to their memories is part of that labour, just as much as is their creation of the domestic space in which their family lives have been played out (Felski, 1999-2000).

Wallpaper might be a backdrop to our lives, but by no means is it just “there”. It is part of the fabric of life and is richly significant to the day to day living that people carry out. People invest a great deal of time, money and emotional labour in picking the right wallpaper for their home. People also make similarly great emotional, financial and time investments in their television viewing. The “wallpaper” memories of the women’s narratives are the consistent theme across the generational interviews collected here, albeit that these memories are expressed in distinct, periodised ways. Wallpaper, the fabric of our homes, also has periodised styles and fashions. In the case of television history, wallpaper is the most useful metaphor for peeling away the different styles of cultural wallpaper to reveal the different patterns of cultural investment of what existed there before. The metaphor of “wallpaper” as applied to television needs to be invested with greater significance



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## Appendix 1

1. Tell me about the sorts of programmes you particularly enjoy watching, or particularly dislike?
2. What made you respond to my advert/article?
3. Can you tell me about your earlier experiences of television?
  - Do you remember first getting a television set? -How did you feel about it? - Where was it placed in the house - How much control did you have over it? And how much control have you had since? – who held the remote control – when was it? How old were you?
4. When you think back to that early period which programmes do you particularly remember?
  - What is it about those programmes that make you remember them? -Did you enjoy them? Why? How did you watch them? Who did you watch them with?
5. Moving on to your teenage years – tell me about any favourite programmes or programmes you didn't enjoy/reasons.
  - Were there any programmes you just couldn't miss? - How did you watch them? Who with? - Remote control, VHS, who decided what to watch?
6. Again for adult preferences – names of programmes, reasons watched etc.
  - Were there any programmes you just couldn't miss? How did you structure them into your day? -Remote control, VHS, who made decisions about what to watch?
7. At what times of day did you watch television? And why did you choose to watch television at those times? Can you remember how you watched television – in a particular room, with family, at certain times of day, lights off/on? - Why did you choose to watch television at those times rather than take part in a different activity? Did television fit in with other things?
8. How was watching television viewed by your family / parents/ husband?
  - Did they think it was a silly way to spend time? That you should be doing something else? - Did they enjoy it themselves? What did they think about the programmes you enjoyed watching?

9. Did any programmes have a particular impact on you at certain parts of your life? As a young woman or an adolescent/child? Why?

10. Do you think you have preferred to watch different programmes at different points in your life? - Have your tastes/preferences changed over time?

11. Do you feel that any of these programmes had been made specifically for women? - What was it about those programmes that made you feel like that? - Were there programmes you didn't enjoy watching which you felt had been specifically made for women, and why didn't you like them?

12. Do you think you ever followed any advice or information from television? Do you feel that TV programmes reflected your own life? Or did they influence you in any way?

13. Were there any programmes you enjoyed watching that you don't think were aimed specifically at women?

14. Are there any television personalities of the time that you particularly remember? Why? Female ones? Role models? Any that you felt were like you? Reflected your own life? Wanted to look like/emulate?

15. Are there any particular characters from television fiction that you really liked or identified with - Maybe a soap character? Sit com characters? - Any that you wanted to emulate/look like? Female characters? Role models? - Any that you felt realistically portrayed what it is like to be a woman?

16. How big a role do you think television has played in your daily life? Growing up, as a young woman, and now? How important has television been? Has this been different at different times?

17. Some of the programmes that are coming out of our archive research are:

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Do you have any memories of those?



## Appendix 2

Archival Programmes – 1947 – 1964

*For the Housewife* (BBC, 1948)

*Leisure and Pleasure* (BBC, 1951-1955)

*About the Home* (BBC, 1951-1958)

*Cookery Club* (BBC, 1955)

*Family Affairs* (BBC, 1955-1961)

*Look and Choose* (BBC, 1955-1957)

*Twice Twenty* (BBC, 1955-1958)

*Your Own Time* (BBC, 1955-1958)

*Signs of the Zodiac* (BBC, 1955)

*Man's Eye View* (BBC, 1956)

*I've Just been Reading* (BBC, 1956-1958)

*Our Miss Pemberton* (BBC, 1957-1958)

*Keep Fit* (BBC, 1957-1961)

*Questions in the Air* (BBC, 1957)

*Room for Improvement* (BBC, 1958)

*Come and Join Us* (BBC, 1958-1960)

*County Flavour* (BBC, 1958)

*Wednesday Magazine* (BBC, 1958-1961)

*Your Turn Now* (BBC, 1958-1960)

*Fashion and Beauty* (BBC, 1958)

*Slim for Health* (BBC, 1958)

*Story on your Doorstep* (BBC, 1958-1959)

*Years of Confusion* (BBC, 1959)

*Remembering Summer* (BBC, 1959)

## **Appendix 3**

### **Programmes other women have recalled**

*Birds of a Feather* (BBC1, 1989-1998; ITV, 2014)

*Blind Date* (LWT, 1991-2003)

*Bluebell* (BBC2, 1986)

*Bouquet of Barbed Wire* (LWT, 1976)

*Butterflies* (BBC2, 1978-1983)

*Come Dancing* (BBC, 1949-1998)

*Compact* (BBC, 1962-1965)

*Coronation Street* (ITV, 1960-present)

*Crossroads* (ATV, 1964-1981; Central, 1982-1988; Carlton, 2001-2003)

*Dixon of Dock Green* (BBC, 1955-1976)

*Duty Free* (Yorkshire Television, 1984-1986)

*Emergency Ward Ten* (ATV, 1957-1967)

*Emmerdale/Emmerdale Farm* (Yorkshire Television, 1972-present)

*Hancock's Half Hour* (BBC, 1956-1960)

*Jukebox Jury* (ABC, 1954-1954)

*Lunch Box with Noele Gordon* (ATV, 1957-1963)

*May to December* (BBC, 1989-1994)

*The Morecambe and Wise Show* (BBC, 1968-1977)

*Only Fools and Horses* (BBC, 1981-2003)

*Open All Hours* (BBC, 1976-1985)

*Pebble Mill at One* (BBC, 1972-1996)

*Peyton Place* (ABC, 1964-1969)

*Poldark* (BBC, 1975-1977)

*Quatermass* (Euston Films and Thames Television, 1979)

*Ready, Steady, Go!* (ATV, 1963-1966)

*Rising Damp* (Yorkshire Television, 1974-1978)

*Rock Follies* (Thames Television, 1976)

*Six-Five Special* (BBC, 1957-1958)  
*Sunday Night at the London Palladium* (ATV, 1955-1967, 1973-1974)  
*Take Three Girls* (BBC, 1969-1971)  
*Thank Your Lucky Stars* (ABC, 1961-1966)  
*That Was the Week That Was* (BBC, 1962-1963)  
*The A Team* (Universal Television, 1983-1987)  
*The Cedar Tree* (ATV, 1976-1979)  
*The District Nurse* (BBC, 1984-1987)  
*The Grove Family* (BBC, 1954-1957)  
*The House of Elliott* (BBC, 1991-1994)  
*The Liver Birds* (BBC, 1969-1978)  
*The Planemakers* (ATV, 1965-1969)  
*The Saint* (New World & Bamore, 1962-1969)  
*The Sweeney* (Euston Films and Thames Television, 1975-1978)  
*The Thorn Birds* (ABC, 1983)  
*The Tube* (Tyne Tees Television, 1982-1987)  
*Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (BBC, 1979)  
*Upstairs Downstairs* (LWT, 1971-1975)  
*Z Cars* (BBC, 1962-1978)

## Appendix 4

**Collie, H. (2013) "It's just so hard to bring it to mind": The significance of 'wallpaper' in the gendering of television memory work. *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture***

**Abstract:** Memory is theorised as constructive and unreliable, while television has been characterised as forgettable and guilty of undermining memory. In a recent series of oral history interviews, British women of different generations shared their recollections of television in the period between 1947 and 1989. This article presents some of these narratives to demonstrate how, far from undermining memory, television's domestic presence has enabled women to use everyday television in their memory work across the life course. The findings suggest that in the process of memory work itself, at least for these women viewers, the metaphor of television memory as 'wallpaper' needs to be developed since it is *precisely* these narratives located within everyday and the quotidian that are loaded with most emotional significance.

**Keywords:** Television, Memory Work, oral history, Women, Reception Studies.

### ***Introduction***

Despite television's rapid embedding within modern life since its post-war re-introduction in 1947 and its obvious location within large shifts in social change, work on the relationship between television and memory has largely been carried out from theoretical and textual perspectives in which the audience can only be implied. Television has traditionally been understood as 'unmemorable' and even "amnesiac", producing audience engagement with television as one in which nothing but the 'big moments' can be remembered.<sup>12</sup> My research indicates that this is not the case, in line with more recent challenges to this approach.<sup>13</sup> Empirical memory work has been heavily invested in documenting and analysing the testimonies of Holocaust survivors or those recollections of similar traumatic historical events that are rendered more memorable by their extraordinary nature. Television reception work on the more everyday aspects of early broadcasting use has hinted at the gendered differences in recalling how radio and then television came to be positioned in the domestic environment, but has typically used the technology as a focus of study rather than the formations of memory itself.<sup>14</sup> While Jerome Bourdon's typologies of memory<sup>15</sup> as 'wallpaper', 'media events', 'flashbulbs' and 'close encounters' are broadly reproduced within my interview data, the definitions that he draws underestimate the gendered nuances of such memory work.

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<sup>12</sup> Mary Ann Doane, 'Information, Crisis, Catastrophe'; Patricia Mellencamp, ed, *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, BFI, 1990, p. 228

<sup>13</sup> Amy Holdsworth, 'Televisual memory'; *Screen* 51(2), 2010, pp. 129-142

<sup>14</sup> For accounts of how audiences remember broadcasting see Shaun Moores, "'The Box on the Dresser': Memories of Early Radio and Everyday Life'; *Media Culture Society* 10: 23, pp 23-40; Tim O'Sullivan, 'Television Memories and Cultures of Viewing 1950-65'; John Corner, ed, *Popular Television in Britain: Studies in Cultural History*, BFI, 1997

<sup>15</sup> Jerome Bourdon, 'Some Sense of Time: Remembering Television'; *History and Memory* 15(2), 2003, p. 13

Drawing upon a series of recent oral history interviews with thirty British women of different ages about their memories of television between 1947 and 1989,<sup>16</sup> this piece considers the intricate nature of memory work and the ways in which television's 'after-life' and its own memorialising help produce the relationship between television and memory in historical interview work. My interview data indicates that although it often can be difficult to remember the specifics of television programmes, the medium has become so interwoven with daily life that memories of programmes and domestic viewing circumstances are deeply embedded in the emotional psyches of women who take great pleasure in their recollection. Emily Keightley's proposition that gender shapes what is remembered and how remembering is enacted, 'acting simultaneously on past and present'<sup>17</sup> is also evident in my own research. Through the women's narratives of television viewing this article indicates how women recall something so common place by situating it within a broader framework of sociality, family and domestic routine, and suggests reasons that this memory work might represent a gendered difference.

### ***Methodology***

As part of the AHRC funded project A History of Television for Women in Britain 1947-1989,<sup>18,19</sup> I carried out thirty oral history interviews with generationally and geographically dispersed British women to try to get a sense of which programmes a female British television audience had viewed as being 'for them' and how significant they may have been to their identities. The women I interviewed were aged between 42 and 95, represented various regions of the United Kingdom,<sup>20</sup> and were exclusively white.<sup>21</sup> The women's social class identification spanned working class and middle class backgrounds and twenty eight of the thirty women were mothers.

The interviews were modelled on an Oral History approach. The first part of the interview was designed to encourage the women to narrate their life story. It separated out their television experiences in to life stages, which I categorised as childhood, teenage years and adulthood. The questions were broad and gave the women space to explore themes around programming that they had particularly enjoyed during each stage, why they thought they had felt particular resonance with those programmes, who they watched television with, how they watched and who controlled what they watched.

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<sup>16</sup> The interviews were carried out between June 2011 and March 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Emily Keightley, 'From Dynasty to Songs of Praise: Television as a cultural resource for gendered remembering'; *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 14, 2011, p. 398

<sup>18</sup> The project's purpose was to begin a sustained historical analysis of television for women in the period 1947-1989 from both production and reception perspectives. Dr Helen Wheatley, Dr Rachel Moseley and Dr Mary Irwin investigated the production and archival aspect of the project at Warwick, whilst Dr Helen Wood and I carried out the audience research at De Montfort. (AHF01725/1)

<sup>19</sup> The period of investigation was narrowed down to these dates -1947, when television begins its sustained broadcast after the Second World War closedown until 1989, when exclusively terrestrial broadcast television ended.

<sup>20</sup> I designated these as Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, North East England, North West England, Central England, South East England and South West England. I received no advert responses from women in Northern Ireland, so this region is not represented in my sample.

<sup>21</sup> I did not receive any responses to my call to interview from ethnic minority women. Furthermore, the De Montfort University press office approached magazines such as *The Voice* and *Asian Eye* with the press release that was run by other publications and neither chose to run it. This is highly suggestive of a different relationship with television within ethnic communities.

## [AV – SYLVIA, 57, DISCUSSING HER EARLY VIEWING]

The middle section probed more temporally general questions around the ways they perceived that television had influenced their actions and choices, who their television role models were and what other people thought of their viewing choices. In the final part of the discussion I ran through two separate lists of programmes which had been broadcast during the period 1947-1989. The first of these was generated by archival work carried out by my project colleague Mary Irwin, comprising a list of programmes that had been created and produced specifically for women in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. The second list documented light entertainment and drama programmes of the period in question, which had emerged from lists that the project team compiled through talking to female friends and relatives.

Memory work involves a set of complex cultural processes which will produce identities, or what Jackie Stacey describes as “the negotiation of ‘public’ discourses and ‘private’ narratives”.<sup>22</sup> The recounting of memories is not a straightforward representation of events. As such, in the histories that the women have provided, I have a series of retrospective reconstructions of a past which are shaped by nostalgia for that recent history in which popular versions of the period have gained cultural currency. The recollections are further shaped by the women’s desire to portray themselves to me in a very specific way.<sup>23</sup> Of course important questions arise around how personal investments shape the memories we produce and how we prioritise what we remember.

### Television as Amnesiac?

Mary Ann Doane has conceived television as “conceptualized as the annihilation of memory, and consequently of history in its continual stress upon the ‘nowness’ of its own discourse”.<sup>24</sup> As she perceives it, only the catastrophic moments, those moments which “can be isolated from the fragmented flow of information” can be remembered.<sup>25</sup> By this definition, other television of a quotidian nature must necessarily be forgotten. Amy Holdsworth has identified how the privileging of this type of traumatic media moment in a televisual sense is a replication of the dominant modes of memory discourse more generally. She also proposes that the domination of Raymond Williams’s concept of ‘flow’ in models of television textuality has allowed television to be characterised as “inducing a wider vacuum within cultural memory resulting in historical amnesia.”<sup>26</sup> Her dismantling of the conception of television as amnesiac, or as a force for undermining memory, from a textual position examines television as memory text and memorialised television moments through a focus on the everyday rather than the extraordinary with the use of example of popular programming such as ER, Grey’s

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<sup>22</sup> Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship*, Routledge, 1994

<sup>23</sup> For more on interview performance and interviewing women, see Norman K. Denzin ‘The reflexive interview and a performative social science’; *Qualitative Research* 1, 2001, pp.23-46, Kristin. M. Langellier, ‘Personal narrative, performance, performativity: Two or three things I know for sure’; *Text and Performance Quarterly* 19(2), 1999, pp.125-144 and Ann Oakley ‘Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms’; Lincoln, and Denzin (eds) *Turning Points in Qualitative Research: Tying Knots in a Handkerchief*. Rowman and Littlefield, 1981.

<sup>24</sup> Doane, 1990, p.227

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 227

<sup>26</sup> Holdsworth, 2010, p.130

Anatomy and The Wire.<sup>27</sup> Holdsworth suggests that by reflecting on patterns and similarities between the textualities of memory and television, we can capture a sense of the experience of watching and remembering television.

While Holdsworth's depiction of the relationship between the medium and its forms of memory and remembrance has been central to nuancing my understanding of how the women have spoken to me about their historical television preferences, it falls within that body of work which implies the audience. Rather than using television as 'memory text', this article will concentrate on the 'memory work' carried out with and through television. This provides us with, in Annette Kuhn's words, "material for interpretation, to be interrogated, mined, for its meanings and its possibilities [because] Memory work is a conscious and purposeful staging of memory".<sup>28</sup>

### ***The Struggle to Remember: memory as work***

During the interviews many of the women drew attention to the difficulties of memory work more generally, with the ephemeral nature of memory proving to be a particular frustration to many. The effort involved in retrieving memories was clear, and particularly well exemplified by Sue O:

"Oh...god, my brain. It's driving me mad because things keep flashing in and out. Once the memories start flowing. No, it's gone... Maybe it'll come back. Just on the edge of my mind and I find that more annoying 'cos I know it's just there and I can't access it. Never mind, there will be other things."

Sue O, 66

The struggle to remember television more particularly was also evident, although the possibility that this might be related to the object itself was not identified by the women. The interviews were littered with errors regarding dates, programme titles and programme personnel and the women constantly sought confirmation of production details. Further, television's role as a form of social conversational currency often led the interviews to move out of a historical register and into talking about more current programming, partly because it was easier to remember but also because it was an activity that was enjoyed by the interviewees and by me, the interviewer.

The role of television as this type of social currency, and the implications that it might have for memory, is indicated here by Enid:

Enid: Yes, but I – I remember, it's strange – I remember the programmes being talked about [*Dixon of Dock Green* (BBC, 1955-1976)] but I can't remember any episodes.

Hazel: That's interesting. So you remember people talking about it?

Enid: Yes.

Hazel: But you don't really remember the programme?

Enid: No.

Enid, 80

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<sup>27</sup> Amy Holdsworth, *Television, memory and nostalgia*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011

<sup>28</sup> Annette Kuhn, 'Memory texts and memory work: Performances of memory in and with visual media'; *Memory Studies* 3, 2010, p.303

This gives a clear picture of the importance of ‘television talk’,<sup>29</sup> and how television’s ‘after life’ is central to the formation of memories of the medium, muddying the waters when it comes to recalling what the difference between what was watched and what was discussed. Indeed it may even indicate that the conversation about television is more memorable than the television itself.

Memories are of course further influenced by the various ways that the television industry affects and alters viewer’s memories through reruns,<sup>30</sup> its own memorialisation<sup>31</sup> and depiction of its own history. The manner in which a television broadcaster chooses to repackage older programming into new schedules might suggest and promote particular histories and sensibilities that diverge from the original broadcast. This can intervene in memories about responses to programmes when they were first aired. For example, in my interviews the women’s enjoyment of pop music programmes during adolescence was a frequent topic of conversation.<sup>32</sup> Over the course of many of the interviews the first programme the women would talk about was *Top of the Pops* (BBC1, 1964-2006). As the interviews progressed many of the women would recall that they had actually frequently found the programme disappointing and would go on to recount programmes which on reflection they felt had in fact had a greater relevance and resonance to them personally, such as *Ready, Steady, Go!* (ITV, 1963-66) and *The Tube* (Channel 4, 1982-1987). Various factors might have caused this particular order of memory, but one of these must be the BBC’s management of *Top of the Pops*’ legacy through sister programme [TOTP2](#) (BBC2, 1994-present) which curated together all the best bits of the long running series and also more recent repeats of full episodes of *Top of the Pops* from the 1970s on BBC4 without a similar legacy for *Ready, Steady, Go!*.

This indicates that television’s social and institutional ‘after-lives’ are factors which require on-going negotiation, constituting a particular type of television memory work. The richness of the conversations indicates that the women *were* able to remember television viewing if not always the programmes themselves. Whilst it might be *difficult* to carry out memory work of this kind, but television, and particularly commonplace, everyday programming, *is* emphatically remembered.

### ***Watching the Big Events***

Much of the ‘memory work’ carried out in these interviews broadly echoes Jerome Bourdon’s typologies of memory discussed earlier, comprising ‘Wallpaper’, ‘Media event’, ‘flashbulb’ and

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<sup>29</sup> Discussions of the significance of television talk and gossip can be found in Dorothy Hobson, “Soap Operas at Work.”; Seiter, Borchers, Kreutzner and Warth, eds, *Remote Control: Television, Audience and Cultural Power*, Routledge, 1991 and Helen Wood, *Talking with Television*, University of Illinois Press, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Lynne Spigel, ‘From the Dark Ages to the Golden Age: Women’s Memories and Television Reruns’; *Screen*, 36(1) Spring 1995, pp. 16-33.

<sup>31</sup> Amy Holdsworth, “‘Television Resurrections’: Television and Memory’; *Cinema Journal*, 47, 3 (Spring, 2008), pp. 137-144.

<sup>32</sup> Hazel Collie and Mary Irwin, ‘ “The Weekend Starts Here”: Young women, pop music television and identity’; *Screen*, forthcoming and Hazel Collie, ‘From Cathy “Queen of the Mods” to Paula “Pop Princess”: Women, Music Television and Adolescent Female Identity’; Mee and Walker, eds, *Rethinking Cinema and Television History*, Cambridge Scholars Press, forthcoming



'close encounter'.<sup>33</sup> What is particularly noticeable in my interviews is how little discussion there was about the catastrophic moments identified by Doane, those moments which would fall within Bourdon's 'media event' or 'flashbulb' memories. Where that conversation around television landmark events occurred, particularly JFK's assassination, it indicates the increasing importance of television to our personal narrativisations of public history; how increasingly engagement with key historical moments is carried out through television and then also recalled in relation to television:

**[AV – FIONA DISCUSSES CHALLENGER AND TEL STAR]**

[The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth](#) It was also a key event in the interview discussions, particularly among women in their sixties who would have been children at the time of broadcast. Conversation around the Coronation was strikingly redolent of Bourdon's suggestion that 'the memories of media events include detailed narratives not so much of the event itself as of the process of reception and the emotions that were triggered in the viewers at that time'<sup>34</sup> in most circumstances. Memories were recounted which detailed how the event acted as the catalyst for the purchase of a first television set, the circumstances of viewing the royal event in those broad, popularly received terms of all the neighbours crowding around one television, and feelings about watching the event on television, all of which reproduce the familiar ways in which the relationship between television and the coronation has become popularly mythologised:

"And then there was The Coronation, and of course we had neighbours come round for that. But my father was, um, in The Guard's band so he was on parade and he was out there playing the trombone and leading them up The Mall sort of thing. So he was late that day and it was all hands on deck. I was half asleep, trying to put the kettle on to make him a cup of tea. And he was rushing round like a madman 'cos the bus was downstairs waiting for him with all the musicians on it. So then...well, thank God it all calmed down and the next thing I remember was this woman in a white dress. Tiny little woman. And there was all this kerfuffle and...I was bored out my mind. To be honest. And of course kids weren't allowed to sit too close to the television 'cos it would draw your eyes. Whatever that means. So we had the worst seats in the house. All the ladies were sat at the front watching this and I went out and the place was deserted. This was Victoria in London, and it was deserted. There was nobody around, everybody was watching and I was so bored. And that's how I remember it."

Maureen, 67

This realisation about the domestic terms in which women spoke about the 'big' moments sent me back to re-assess the women's conversation around other 'traumatic' and 'big' moments in their remembered viewing and I discovered that the women frequently used these moments to talk more about viewing circumstances and familial relationships than about the events themselves. This was a theme that was constant throughout their talk around *all* programming and references to big events which interrupted the flow were relatively rare in the interviews. This is compared to the enormous amount of discussion about everyday, often 'low status' programming, indicating that it played more dominant role in the women's modes of remembering their lives in relation to television.

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<sup>33</sup> Bourdon, 2003, p 12.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p.14

### *Talking About Everyday Television*

It became clear that the women's memories of television they had watched and their viewing practices within the domestic context were bound together tightly. Tim O'Sullivan's (1997) comment on his own oral history research that "other memories frequently fuse television programmes and experiences to the rites of passage of domestic biography, serving as markers for remembered people and situations, of changing relations of kinship, lifestyle and shared experience"<sup>35</sup> appears to be borne out in my own research. Television is grounded in these women's lives, and it is interesting to see how many of the women work to remember specific dates by anchoring public events to their personal biographies, as exemplified here by Enid:

"Um...ooh no, wait a minute, no it would be before then...no actually, yes. Cos if I was married sort of – I can never remember really. It was about 1958, 59 when I was married and I had my daughter the first year and then my son two years later. So it would be very early Sixties."

Enid, 80

Traditionally viewed as both a domesticated and feminised medium, my interviews demonstrate that television has become such an integral part of 'the everyday' that it is precisely through other everyday activities such as relationships with family and friends and domestic routine that the programmes recalled, and the reasons for their significance in the women's lives, emerge. Here Marilyn begins to talk about *Sunday Night at the London Palladium* (ATV, 1955-1967), [I WOULD LIKE TO INCLUDE A LINK TO YOUTUBE HERE - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSrLL97IMp0>] a programme that many of the women aged in their sixties and older spoke about;

"There was one time my sister was due to give birth to my second niece and we were all sat there one Sunday, 'cos she'd come down, we were all sat there watching TV and she started going into labour. *Sunday Night at the London Palladium* was on, I'll always remember it [HC laughs] and her husband came down and had to take her into hospital. And I'll always remember my mother saying 'don't you dare have that baby, I've gotta hear Shirley Bassey tonight. So don't you dare have that baby before'. But I've never forgotten that. We always watched that."

Marilyn, 64

This animated memory led into quite a detailed account of her family's viewing of the programme, including having to watch it in her pyjamas because it over-ran her bedtime and she had to run to bed the moment it had finished and how her dad used to make toffee on a Sunday so that each member of the family could have two squares in a handkerchief to eat while they watched. The fullness of her recollections of the programme, a fixture of her family's week, as a result of the biographical detail involved is much richer than any of the discussion that occurred around 'catastrophic' news moments or events.

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<sup>35</sup> Tim O'Sullivan, 'Television Memories and Cultures of Viewing 1950-65'; John Corner, ed, *Popular Television in Britain: Studies in Cultural History*, BFI, 1997, p. 163.

Often, the television moments that were remembered as special in some way, were deemed thus because of the involvement of a family member in the programme and, importantly, the role that programme played in reinforcing the familial bond. In the following interview excerpt, Belinda talks about *The Clothes Show* (BBC1, 1986-2000), a programme which she identified as enjoying very much and yet the memory she chose to share with me was one which related to her step-daughter's interaction with the show.

"That was lovely [The Clothes Show]. But then again, I remember that because of a personal connection. 'Cos my step daughter who was only sixteen, and her father was a – you know, my partner was a photographer. She didn't live with us but I persuaded him to take some photographs of her, um, to send into The Clothes Show. And they were wonderful photos. I mean, they really were wonderful photos, and she got in and we went up to Derby and – she got into the finals, the last sixteen so we went up there to watch her. I mean, she was only sixteen, never walked along a catwalk, walking along, carrying her...fur coat and – oh, it was just incredible."

Belinda, 70

Other examples of family and friend relationships' influence in remembering television programmes extended to sibling and spousal disagreement about what to watch, discussing favourite programmes with friends and colleagues the day after broadcast, and using television programmes as a basis for childhood group play:

"I do remember Watch with Mother, so I must've seen a bit of those. Um...but the teatime programmes were the sort of action adventure ones like Champion [starts singing the theme tune] Champion the wonder horse, and so I went out in the garden and played on a broom handle pretending it was a horse, and all of that. And so our games very often were dictated by what we'd seen on television. This was still the time when playground games were dominated by the war...you know, kids were still – less the girls, but the boys were playing Germans and...you know, British or they were playing cowboys and Indians, so there was a lot of – the cowboy genre was all over the place then. And so we watched a lot of Wagon Train, Wells Fargo, Bonanza. That was a bit later on I think. I wasn't so keen on the westerns 'cos I couldn't really identify with them. I could identify more with Robin Hood and Ivanhoe, I don't know why. But less with the westerns I think."

Sue E, 60

Domestic routine and television's role not only in terms of fitting into that routine, but actually framing it and creating it<sup>36</sup> was also a common theme of conversation by the women. These were particularly recounted around experiences of motherhood which became a central feature of discussion around television, relationships and intimacy.

"I remember when [my daughter] was little we used to have our – that was the time of day when we'd have our – It sounds awful really, but sometimes we'd have our meal in front of *Sesame Street*, 'cos that's when she would have her meal and then have a snack in the evening. So we'd watch *Sesame Street* and then go out for a walk, go to the park in the afternoon. But we'd sort of talk about things that

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<sup>36</sup> Dorothy Hobson, *Crossroads: the Drama of a Soap Opera*, Methuen, 1982

had been going on, and she loved the dog that used to count. There was an Alsatian that used to count the numbers and things. The lovely characters in it were just fabulous really.”

Jenny, 52

In some sense these types of memories broadly correspond with Bourdon’s ‘wallpaper’ metaphor in that they appear to relegate television to the backdrop as the life story and relationship themselves take stage. Indeed there is a suggestion that ‘wallpaper’ memories are somehow less satisfactory than others since Bourdon suggests that, ‘those memories often emerge with the help of the stimulus of program magazines, apparently because they are dormant and less emotional than the rest’. But this is clearly not the case in my study I would suggest that in fact, this is an area where gendered relationships to the past can be seen to differ both in terms of the ease of recollection and of the loading of emotion. In my interviews, the women’s talk about specific programmes was quite cursory, more a simple mention that they had watched it, until there was a biographical hook which would begin to fill out the details of their memories. Interestingly, the final section of the interview, when I provided lists of programmes that were intended to act as stimulus to memory, was the least successful part of the interview. With a list of titles to read through, most of the women resorted to responding with comments such as “Yes, I remember that” or “No, don’t remember that”, with little detail around the programmes, suggesting that the women were less interested in talking about programmes which did not also stimulate biographical memories. Further, it is indicative of the way that discussion of television programmes came out of personal memories, rather than vice versa.

There is a quality about these reminiscences that indicate the ways in which television can be perceived as a medium of intimacy. Its situation within the domestic makes it pivotal to these moments of familial intimacy. This echoes Susan Geiger’s suggestion that women’s embeddedness in familial life may shape their view of the world and consciousness of historical time,<sup>37</sup> and Emily Keightley’s conclusion that, ‘Television content is used to mark common cultural knowledge and is actively deployed to articulate and re-establish commonality. In this process women’s agency signals the gendered nature of their emotional labour in their everyday remembering and the key role that televisual texts can play in its performance’.<sup>38</sup> The interview excerpts quoted here are notable for their concentration on memories of childhood and motherhood, the life course stages that most women were most able to narrate, whereas memories of teenage television viewing, aside from popular music programmes, were more difficult for the women to articulate. Many described their viewing as something which “dropped away” during this period, as other commitments began to eat into television viewing time. Such narratives indicate that there are life stages or periods when we are more tied to and involved with the domestic: life stages when the ‘wallpaper’ itself is imbued with an emotional significance and that this might affect recollections of television as a domestic medium.

### ***Conclusion***

My interview data indicates that not only is television not amnesiac in the way it has historically been characterised, but that the medium substantially contributes to memories of the everyday and that this represents a gendered relationship with the past. The viewing

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<sup>37</sup> Susan NG Geiger, ‘Women’s Life Histories: Method and Content’; *Signs*, 1986, p.348

<sup>38</sup> Keightley, 2011,p. 407

narratives of the British women I spoke to are not significantly dominated by recollections of those moments which interrupt the flow, but rather by those programmes and viewing contexts which inhabited that flow. That is not to say that these 'big', disruptive moments have not been remembered, but that in their curation of memories to present in a specific interview the women I spoke to were preferencing more mundane, 'wallpaper' recollections. This indicates how the female audience might use television as a memory text in a similar way as the photographs and family albums of Annette Kuhn's work on memory,<sup>39</sup> to express and pick through "interconnections at the level of remembrance between the private, the public and the personal."<sup>40</sup> For these women, their personal investments, the means by which they judged themselves and asked others to judge them related to their location within family. David Morley's proposition that 'Television viewing may be a privatized activity – by comparison with going to the movies, for example – but it is still largely conducted within, rather than outside, social relations',<sup>41</sup> formulated at a time concurrent with the period I have asked women to recall, indicates why this might be. Generationally, the women's narratives across life course were remarkably similar, suggesting that a feminine gendered relationship to the past remains relatively constant, despite the dramatic social and domestic changes which occurred between 1947 and 1989. Television is widely understood to be a shared medium and a domestic medium and it is in this context that it continues to 'live' in memory, particularly for women who have invested so much of themselves within that landscape. Jérôme Bourdon's suggestion that the 'taken for grantedness'<sup>42</sup> of the domestic landscape renders those 'wallpaper memories' as more dormant represents a gendered inflection. If it is a female's labour, physical and emotional, which has created the very character of that domestic landscape then it seems probable that there is nothing 'taken for granted' at all about her relationship with it.<sup>43</sup> I would argue that these memories re-invest the 'wallpaper' metaphor with more biographical significance than previously thought.

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<sup>39</sup> Annette Kuhn, 'Memory texts and memory work: Performances of memory in and with visual media'; *Memory Studies* 3, 2010, pp 298 - 313

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 312

<sup>41</sup> David Morley, *Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure* (London: Comedia, 1986, p.14

<sup>42</sup> Bourdon, 1993, p.13-14

<sup>43</sup> Rita Felski, 'The invention of everyday life'; *New Formations* 39, 1999, pp.13-31

## **Appendix 5**

**Collie, H. (2014) 'From Cathy "Queen of the Mods" to Paula "Pop Princess": Women, music television and adolescent female identity' in L. Mee and J. Walker *History, Cinema and Television: New Approaches*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars**

Scholarly work around female viewing preferences has tended to concentrate on genres traditionally characterised and denigrated as 'feminine', skewing the field to some extent through a concentration on soap opera and drama (Hobson 1982; Modleski 1979; Brown 1994; Brunsdon 2000). Such research may have been either audience or textual, but in all cases has proceeded from a basic starting assumption about what constitutes 'television for women'. More recently, the scope of academic investigation of gendered viewing has widened to include news, reality television and documentary (Skeggs, Thumim and Wood 2008; Hill 2005 and 2007; Engel-Manga 2003), but what other genres might have fallen through the gaps? This is not just a question of what women have watched, either just because it was on or because it fitted in with what they were doing, but rather because it specifically 'spoke' to them in some way; because it particularly resonated. As part of the AHRC funded project Television for Women 1947-1989,<sup>i</sup> I carried out thirty oral history interviews with generationally and geographically dispersed British women to try to get a sense of which programmes a female British television audience had viewed as being 'for them'. My interview data suggests that although soaps and dramas have indeed been important to women, other genres have been equally significant at certain stages of women's lives. Particularly interesting has been the revelation that music programming has been integral to how teenage girls have negotiated their adolescent years, and to their creation of teenage identities across generations.

Critical academic investigation of the relationships that young women might have with popular music has been limited to questions around various forms of fandom (Brown and Schulze 1990; Ehrenreich, Hess and Jacobs 1992; Rhodes 2005) or how women have 'managed' in the frequently misogynistic environment of rock music culture (Whiteley 2000; Schippers 2002). Norma Coates has drawn attention to the gendering of musical genres, noting the 'discursive and stylistic segregation' of rock and pop. She identifies that 'rock' is metonymic with 'authenticity' and 'pop' with 'artifice', and that ultimately the two are set in binary opposition whereby 'rock' is 'masculine' and 'pop' is 'feminine' (Coates 1997, 52-53). Rock, of course, assumes the dominant position and much academic literature is concerned with locating women within that culture. Critical engagement with the *television* audience of popular music programming has been rare, and where it has occurred it has not recognised the differing gendered positions that might exist in the viewing of music programmes (Cubitt 1984), treating the entire youth audience as one homogenous group and preferencing music as a category for analysis over television (Frith 2002).

Conversely, extant scholarship on women's identification with female pop and rock stars, such as Madonna and The Spice Girls (Danuta Walters 1995; Lemish 1998), connects with the importance of female artists and especially female presenters for young women watching music television which emerged from my interviews. So too does Karen Lury's account of her memory of Tracey Ullman, whose use of the hairbrush microphone in a *Top of the Pops* performance is for Lury a knowing celebration of her and other young women's own relationship with pop music and female performance. Here, Lury hints at the significance of this gendered performance for a female audience and demonstrates how different viewing groups might have a

different relationship with the programme, “I understood Tracey Ullman’s performance because I related to the myth of Top of the Pops in a particular way – because I am British, a woman, and had watched Top of the Pops for many years” (Lury, 2001, 45-46).

It would be disingenuous to state the importance of pop programmes without acknowledging the paucity of programming for teenagers during the period of study. Until the early 1980s, British television had not actively created content specifically for the teenage audience. The age group was either grouped under children’s television or was ‘catered for almost exclusively through pop music programming’ (Moseley 2007, 186). Women who were teenagers in the 1950s, 1960s or 1970s, then, might have recalled these programmes as teenage viewing simply because that was the sole television output that appealed to them and that addressed their interests. However, this cannot negate the fact that it did appeal to them very much, and during my interviews the women’s conversation around the genre was animated and extensive, suggesting that the programmes had a resonance and importance beyond merely being available to view. Additionally, women who were teenagers in the 1980s, when drama began to be targeted at a teenage audience, were also heavily invested in music programming.

In this chapter I will present women’s talk about pop programming to illuminate the various ways they identified the genre as being important to them as adolescents.

### ***Habitus, Field and Cultural Capital***

Bourdieu’s understanding of society is based on the movement of ‘capital’ through social spaces as it is used by individuals. The vacillations of the Marxist concept of economic capital are well accounted for, but Bourdieu proposes other metaphorical



forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986, 243). His model of ‘cultural capital’ exists in three different states: in an embodied state in the form of durable dispositions in the mind and body; in an objectified state in the form of cultural goods such as books or paintings; and in an institutionalised state which might take the form of academic credentials. Like economic capital, cultural capital can be accumulated and lost, invested and distributed within a specific social field.

The social *field* where cultural capital is traded is the place of competition between individuals or institutions who are competing for the same stake (Bourdieu 1986). Power is achieved by the ability to confer or withdraw legitimacy from the other participants. Each field generates a specific *habitus*, a system of dispositions and a ‘feel for the game’ (Bourdieu 1990, 66). The notion of *habitus* is the means by which we acquire ways of being through practice and socialisation rather than through conscious, formalised learning, throughout our whole lives.

There has been an increasing engagement of contemporary feminist theory with Bourdieu’s work as a means of understanding societal power relations and the creation of gender identities (Moi 1991; Skeggs and Adkins 2005; McNay 1999; Lovell 2000). Bourdieu is often criticised for not directly inscribing gender analysis into his theories, but Toril Moi makes a strong case for the appropriation of Bourdieu’s work. She highlights how Bourdieu’s theories on everyday life offer us the tools to understand how gender is lived out, enabling us to ‘link the humdrum details of everyday life to a more general social analysis of power’ (Moi 1991, 1020). Beverley Skeggs has suggested that, for Bourdieu, cultural capital is always associated with high culture, making it difficult to see different variants of femininity as a form of cultural capital (Skeggs 2005), and the constant necessity to ‘trade up’, as with economic capital, means

that women are often unable to compete. In fact, and counter to Skeggs' argument, my research indicates that, at least during the teenage years, women *can* and *do* trade in feminine cultural capital in a very specific field.

### ***Resourceful Girls***

Nearly two thirds of the women I spoke to independently talked about the importance of pop music programmes in their lives and for nine of those, the programmes had a particular resonance. The oldest women in my sample, those in their eighties and nineties, had a slightly different relationship with music programming on television. For most of these women, television was not a part of their lives until they were older, and this type of teenage musical programme did not begin to be broadcast until the late 1950s with programmes such as *Six-Five Special* (BBC, 1957-1958) and *Oh Boy!* (ABC, 1958-1959). By this period, the women were in their late twenties and early thirties, and had moved out of adolescence and into a different life stage in which they were wives and mothers. Although they did talk about the role of radio and music in their lives, their discussion of television music shows was limited to reminiscences about enjoying the music programmes with their own children. Again, this is highly suggestive of the role of music programming in women's lives as specific to their adolescence.

The women I spoke to were selected from respondents to a series of magazine adverts and press releases, which I placed with the help of the De Montfort University press office. The publications which we approached had a diverse readership and included *Woman's Weekly*, *Yours*, *Saga*, *The Lady* and *TV Times*. I interviewed thirty women in

total, ranging in age between 42 and 95 and living in diverse regions of the United Kingdom. I designated these regions as Scotland, Wales, North East, North West, Central, South West and South East. No women responded from Northern Ireland. Generational attitudes were the main focus of my research, and accordingly, when creating the interview sample, I focussed on a broad range of ages with a more limited attention to social class. As such, the class spread was limited to working and middle class. Many of the women who identified themselves as working class when younger recognised that they had been socially mobile and, at this stage in their lives, were middle class.<sup>ii</sup> The sample was exclusively white.<sup>iii</sup>

The importance of music programming to women was one of the first clear trends to begin to emerge from the research, and even before the interview process started, the responses I received to the adverts were heavily laden with references to popular music programmes such as *Top of The Pops* (BBC1, 1964-2006), *Ready Steady Go* (ITV, 1963-66), *The Tube* (Channel 4, 1982-1987) and *Six Five Special* (BBC1, 1957-1958). This was a trend that was common across generation and class. What became clear from my interview data was that this was a genre that women made time for as teenagers, at a time in their lives when other viewing fell away as social, familial and educational commitments began to encroach upon the time they would have spent watching television as younger children. Many described television at this time as something which ‘dropped away’, suggestive of a skin or clothing that had belonged to a different phase of their lives that could be divested. Yet pop programmes prevailed, leading me to question what it was about the programmes that made them different to others. The typical and enduring popular culture image of girls’ engagement with music is of the hysterical fan, screaming for her most recent object of lust, be this in the heady days of

Beatlemania or, more recently, with Justin Bieber's 'Beliebers'. All of the women I interviewed identified themselves as heterosexual, and an element of attraction to male music stars does permeate some of the interviews. As Tracey put it:

"I used to love watching [*Top of the Pops*] for David Cassidy and David Essex.

All of those. But then I discovered David Bowie, and he had my heart forever."

Tracey, 52

Patricia (64) spoke about her crush on Cliff Richard which led her to avidly consume music programmes so that she could look at him, and recalled how a family member scathingly suggested that he would be here one minute and gone the next. In choosing to talk about men, however, Tracey and Patricia were in the minority, and desire for male performers did not emerge over all as the main reason the women chose to talk to me about music programming or why their connections with and memories of the programmes remained so strong after all this time.

Free access to music, which was otherwise inaccessible or unaffordable, came through very strongly in the interviews. So here, for example, Sylvia remembers how important music programmes were for her to maintain some 'street cred':

"We used to record *Top of the Pops*. 'Cos we didn't have any money so we used to do it on tapes. We'd have been quite geeky without it I think. It was important."

Sylvia, 50

Sylvia grew up in a working class family in the East End of London in the 1970s. Her father had died when she was young and her mother was the family's sole breadwinner.

Within the context of talking about *Top of the Pops* she remembered that her mother used to let her and her younger brother have parties, and the songs they played were all recorded from the television or radio because that was the only way they could afford to own their favourite music. Dawn also recalled using *The Tube* and *The Old Grey Whistle Test* (BBC2, 1971-1987) to curate and archive her own personal musical selections:

“Yeah, we would keep stuff like that for ages, and it would get re-watched quite a lot. And have little collections, certainly for certain bands, and kind of record certain songs...we were much more – rather than now, when you go out and leave it to set record entire programmes, back then you’d be sat there with the remote control specifically getting the songs that you wanted. Cos really it was the same as having it on record but you could get it free.”

Dawn, 42

Several women spoke about this type of engagement, which differs from Ann Gray’s depiction of women’s strategic refusal of recording technology as ‘chore’ (Gray 1992). This is clearly related to their life stage. Gray’s study of women aged between 19 and 52 dealt with their ongoing negotiation of television around the dynamics of the household, whilst my interviewees were recalling a period of youth which may be tinged with nostalgia rather than dealing with the pressures of the everyday. The importance of this means of obtaining permanent copies of music for free, essentially pre-dating illegal digital downloading by a couple of decades, was a frequent topic of conversation during interviews in relation to music programming. However, the women also talked at length about the importance of the radio in their musical education, indicating that free access to music on the television cannot fully explain the

significance or resonance of the programmes. Music could be just as easily recorded from the radio, where both the choice and possibly even the cultural prestige of youth music offered by that medium would surely have been greater. The importance of music performance on television must, therefore, stem in some way from the visual capacity of the medium.

### *Distinction and Quality*

As conversation around the subject progressed it became clear that not all music programmes were created equally in teenage girl's eyes. In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984) Bourdieu indicates that aesthetic concepts such as taste are defined by those in power, and he demonstrates how social class tends to determine a person's likes and interests, as well as how those distinctions are reinforced in daily life. What emerges from these interviews is a slightly different picture of the construction of hierarchies of taste and distinction. Social class was not a factor in the women's engagement with pop music programmes, but it is accurate to say that, in this particular instance, ideas around what constitutes 'good' and 'bad' taste are still being defined by those teenage girls who wield power. The controllers of this field are not members of a class elite.

When asked about important teenage viewing, the women would frequently begin by talking about *Top of the Pops* and its importance in the weekly schedule. It genuinely appears to have been 'can't miss television', because to miss it would risk exclusion from playground or office conversation the following day when everyone else would be discussing the programme, as in Dorothy Hobson's work on soap opera and office

culture (Hobson 1991). However, as the conversation and reminiscence continued, many of the women revealed a more discerning approach to the genre than is initially suggested and would come to the conclusion that they had actually often found *Top of the Pops* ‘crap’, ‘boring’ or ‘rubbish’. Sue E (60) had kept diaries throughout the period and noted that she had many entries where she wrote about *Top of the Pops* in these terms. The audience were criticised by many women for their unfashionable clothes, and for not looking as though they were enjoying themselves:

“It used to make me laugh how sort of rigid the audience were. You were lucky if they shuffled from one foot to the other really...they sometimes didn’t even look like they were enjoying it. Serious. And very old fashioned. Tank tops, boring T-shirts and A-line skirts. Things like that.”

Tracey, 52

This indicates that in their recollections of the programme, the women are taking pleasure in discrimination by asserting their own taste and cultural knowledge (Bourdieu 1984). Despite their dislike of the programme, its success lay in offering them a rare space for superiority. The middle-aged male presenters drafted in from Radio One, including David Hamilton, Noel Edmonds and Mike Reid, were criticised for being old, out of touch and for ogling and pawing young girls<sup>iv</sup>. Conversely, the women seem to have had a completely different relationship with *Ready Steady Go* and *The Tube*, and the female presenters of those programmes, Cathy McGowan and Paula Yates, emerged as absolutely central to why, as girls, these women devoured the genre. They were held up as style icons and as role models. Interestingly, both of these series were produced by women,<sup>v</sup> and it is striking just how prominent women with agency

are on camera in these programmes, in both the audience and presenting, compared to *Top of the Pops* (Collie and Irwin, forthcoming).

### ***The Field of Teenage Girlhood***

So how were girls watching these programmes? Although I have briefly discussed the access to music releases already, the programmes additionally offered performances by the musical acts on the shows. A common point among the women in their sixties and seventies was how exciting it was for them to actually see the performances of some of the big acts from outside the United Kingdom:

“The thing that was called *Top of the Pops*, if it was called that then. I can’t remember. That was awful, when you look back. Everybody miming. But it was just to see the actual people. Bill Haley came over. Yeah.”

Lynda, 64

For many of these women, this type of programme represented their only means to do this, even though, as Lynda indicates, they might not hold the programme in particularly high regard. The content of pop music programmes was a staple of playground or workplace conversation the following day, and it was important to have been a part of that shared viewing experience.

“*Top of the Pops* of course. I mean then it was wonderful to have *Top of the Pops*. I was watching it when PJ Proby, he split his trousers singing. And he was always known for that. I was watching – every Thursday night that used to come on at seven.”

Marilyn, 63



Even fifty years later, the fact that Marilyn saw this moment as it was broadcast is important enough to her that she felt it necessary to mention during the interview.

Fashion and style were a huge attraction of music programming. The audience and the acts were intensely scrutinised for fashion ideas, and as mentioned previously, the relative unstylishness of the *Top of the Pops* audience was one of the reasons women used to deride the programme. Although some female acts on the shows were name-checked for their style influence, including Dusty Springfield and Lulu, it was the female presenters of *Ready Steady Go* and *The Tube* who were foremost in the fashion stakes for teenage girls. Their clothes, hair and make-up were learned to be practised at home and copied for Friday night out on the town:

“I personally did my thing, and I wasn’t interested in sharing [my fashion knowledge]. If [other girls] came and didn’t look fashionable, well sorry you obviously haven’t been watching the same programmes as I have. I’m not going to tell you what to watch or wear. I thought of myself as a leader of fashion.”

Fiona, 64

In these recollections we begin to see a clear identification of a field, as per Bourdieu’s model that has the potential to be played, conquered and controlled. In this instance, it is a field of teenage girlhood. The women’s recollections also indicate *how* that field is to be played. Lynda and Marilyn’s insistence that it was vital to see the programme as it was broadcast, and Fiona’s assertion of the importance of the fashion depicted on the shows, are clear indications of the means by which that field might be controlled or, conversely, lost. Clearly, to miss particular aspects and key moments of this appointment viewing and, therefore, an important shared event and topic of

conversation might exclude a teenage girl and affect her position in the game. Fiona's position as "leader of fashion" is more explicit, and was important precisely because it demonstrated her control of the field that she operated in.

### *Identification*

McGowan and Yates were central to the women's talk about these programmes, to the complete exclusion of their male counterparts Keith Fordyce and Jools Holland. This suggests something quite unlike the hysterical and hormonally-charged screaming girl fans of popular culture, and it is substantially different to much of the work that was discussed in the introduction of this chapter. Here it was other women who were the focus of girls' attention, and not in a sexualised way. In her work on women's relationships with female cinematic stars of the Hollywood Golden Age, Jackie Stacey constructed a complex and nuanced account of the pleasures of cinematic identification, and the processes of the formations of feminine identities. On one hand, the women she studied valued difference, which could transport them into a world where their desires might be fulfilled, while at the same time valuing similarity for enabling them to recognise qualities they already had (Stacey 1994, 128). In my own interviews, this identification with the female stars of the music programmes and attempted appropriation of their styles is apparent. Dawn talks about Paula Yates' look deeply influencing her own, while Sue E (60) goes further in stating that 'like most girls I probably wanted to be Cathy McGowan'. It was not enough to *look* like her, she also wants to *be* her. The way that the women's attention was fixed on McGowan and Yates over and above the many, very stylish, female acts on the programmes suggests that

these two women captured girls' imagination and attention because they were, in some way, not only less starry than the featured musicians, but also more familiar through their weekly appearance on television. Their positions as television personalities, rather than film stars, made them just glamorous enough to want to emulate, but not so out of reach for the girls to possibly achieve as the Hollywood stars of Stacey's work or the female A-list musical stars of the time. McGowan's involvement with the show started when she answered an advert for 'a typical teenager' for the show,<sup>vi</sup> before being propelled in front of the cameras, a route to fame which seems eminently real and possible. In the same way a highly feminised cultural icon such as Madonna might provide girls with a set of symbolic tools by which they can create their own definitions of femininity (Kaplan 1993), so might the very particular, and potentially more achievable to an adolescent, femininities represented by Yates and McGowan. Precisely because the women did not talk of their imitation of the two presenters in terms of attracting boys, it is tempting to view it as a practice that they carried out for themselves as part of their self-creation as women.

Cathy and Paula were not only integral to how the girls created their physical teenage identities. Their very presence, these women who were like them, on television in the music programmes, was inspirational, for many girls opening up the possibility to be in charge of their own destinies and legitimating girls' choices to do and be someone different to what they felt society expected of them:

“Paula Yates on *The Tube* really. Um, I think with *Top of the Pops* it was more difficult to align with because the presenters were mainly men. They were just so cheesy. And to get a woman as a presenter who was firstly not really posh,

and could also pull off being sexy as well, and come over as being smart. I suppose really, yeah, she was like a role model.”

Dawn, 42

It's also clear that in the viewing of music programmes, girls were creating their own, domestic, rebellion. It is abundantly clear from the interviews that, at best, parents were utterly bemused by the shows. They didn't 'get it', a further indication that music programmes weren't 'for them'. At the other end of the spectrum, parents didn't like or approve of the shows and viewing at all was an act of defiance, likened here by Belinda to covertly listening to the radio broadcasts:

“When we only had the radio a lot of teenagers weren't allowed to listen to the...what was it? The light p... where you had pop music, things like that? You weren't allowed. You know, 'cos it was just thought – Radio Luxemburg and things like that, you had to listen to it under the bed covers because parents just didn't like you doing it. They thought you could be corrupted by it. And I guess it was much the same as this with parental control over television for a lot of people.”

Belinda, 72

Interestingly, Belinda did not watch music programmes as a teenager at home, because her father would not allow her to, but she reminisced about enjoying them when married and, particularly, once she had children. In fact, two other women (who both also married and became mothers in their teens) remembered enjoying *Top of the Pops* and *Ready Steady Go*, recalling how dancing along to their favourite songs after the birth of their children in some small way made up for the fact that they could not go out any

more. This depicts another scene of small-scale, domestic rebellion and rejection of the way that the women were expected to behave.

Essentially, in the access offered to fashion, music, celebrities and, to some extent, advice, the women who spoke to me were using music programmes as an extension of teen magazines, to shape their lifestyles. This was a position that was made explicit by Fiona when she talked about how difficult it could be to get the magazines she wanted in 1960s' Aberdeen, and how these programmes filled that void to some extent. The domestic nature of viewing these programmes, and the opportunity for some form of rebellion, is particularly feminine in character, if we consider that traditionally boys have had more freedom outside the home. Angela McRobbie's extensive empirical work (McRobbie 1976, 1978, 1991, 2000) on working class teenage girls' culture is pertinent to my work. She questions how girls are placed in youth cultures, noting that while boys appear to be participatory and at the forefront (for example, Teddy Boys and the Mod/Rocker confrontations), girls seem to be absent. Her suggestion is that instead of trying to place girls in boys' culture, it would be more useful to recognise that the girls' participation is sustained by a complementary, but different pattern. Boys are participative and technically informed, while girls are fans and readers. Here we see that there are different ways of 'wearing' knowledge (Straw 1997), and that there may be gendered differences at play. Again Bourdieu's work on field and habitus illuminates precisely how and why this might be; that the field of teenage boydom has different rules for control than the field of teenage girlhood. Angela McRobbie identifies feminine teenage fan activity as a bedroom culture, a private culture, and has demonstrated how fashion, hair and make-up ideas are picked up from magazines and practised at home in private. Her research was carried out in the late 1970s and early 1980s, making it

comparatively contemporary with some of the women's memories from my interviews. If anything, this period could be seen as a more liberated moment than some of the histories which the women I spoke to shared. McRobbie's research echoes the way the women, as girls, consumed the musical culture of these programmes. In most cases, the women recalled watching the programme at home with their family, firmly locating themselves in the domestic sphere and frequently choosing to talk about their own relationship with the programme through their relationships with others. Patricia (64) remembered that her stepfather watched her dancing and miming along to *Six Five Special*, instead of watching the programme himself, as if he could not believe his eyes. She drew attention to the gendered differences in the way teenagers watched the programme when she exclaimed 'he only had boys, for goodness' sake'. Although Patricia watched *Six Five Special* with her mother, step-father and three step-brothers, only she was so engrossed that she performed along with it. Similarly, Jenny (52) recalled dancing to The Jackson Five during one edition of *Top of the Pops* when her grandmother was babysitting and wondered, with hindsight, what on earth her grandmother had made of the whole event. The women's memories indicate that their immersion in the programme, with associated dancing and singing along, made the viewing an event, but additionally sets them out as 'different', and distinct to family members of other genders and generations.

A fortuitous opportunity to talk to men about their experiences of music television arose when the team behind this research project set up The Pop Up TV Pop Shop, an innovative impact event in a disused shop in Coventry city centre. It materialised that male adolescents' responses to the programmes had not been that different to the women's, and that music programming had been important to them as adolescents. Men

also talked about the thrill of seeing their favourite bands on television, and copying the style of male musicians and on the shows. Where the men's recollections differed significantly from the women's, however, was in the way they used their initial memories of watching the programmes to situate themselves within youth culture of the time. Whereas the women I interviewed and spoke to in the shop talked of their engagement with the programmes and presenters, and then moved on to discuss family viewing and associated publications, and beautifying activities that went on domestically, the men's memories instead quickly turned to the clubs and gigs they attended outside of the home. They additionally used it as an opportunity to educate me about various musical and technical aspects of youth sub-cultures, reiterating McRobbie's pattern of boys as technically informed and participative and girls as fans and readers. Two of the women I interviewed, Hilary and Jane, spoke about their consumption of music programmes during later adolescence when they were at nursing and teaching college respectively. Although not watching in a domestic context, both drew attention to the group viewing of *Top of the Pops* in the common room every Thursday evening, again giving their discussion of the programme a relational quality, and highlighting the importance of group appointment viewing and regular scheduling during this period.

‘When I went into nursing the only thing we had time to watch was *Top of the Pops*. We used to make a beeline for that. Every Thursday, that was it. All the nurses round the telly for Top of the Pops.’

Hilary, 64

This gives some insight into the importance to women of the shared aspect of the programmes. Although they were often watched at home with family, part of the enjoyment of the genre was as a shared experience with friends, either during the act of viewing or through later conversation when notes on performances and fashion could be compared.

While Simon Frith has assumed that there is no relationship between youth and music on television (Frith 2002), my data shows that female members of the youth audience were in fact deeply engaged with the genre. In suggesting that one of the limitations for television as a music medium is its relatively poor sound quality, he assumes that the musical experience itself is key in understanding why adolescents might watch music programmes, but as I have demonstrated at length in this chapter, the music itself was not the only reason to watch. Frith also suggests that ‘the musical moments that we remember are the ones that disrupt the flow, that become newsworthy’ (Frith 2002, 280), citing Elvis Presley’s comeback gig in 1968 or LiveAid in 1985. Aside from PJ Proby’s split trousers and one mention of the late night repeat of LiveAid as viewing material chosen by Patricia on a particularly arduous night of breastfeeding a young baby, the majority of the interviewees did not talk about anything that could be considered newsworthy in these programmes at all. In fact, what they remember is as mundane and decidedly un-newsworthy as the act of viewing itself, and how the programmes then filtered into their daily lives.

Frith argues that music and television are mutually exclusive. That, because ‘youth self-consciously differentiates itself from the rhythms of daily family life’ (Frith 2002, 280), television music programmes were created to be family friendly and to appeal to parents as much as to youthful viewers. He also categorically states that adolescents do not



watch television because they are otherwise engaged with youthful acts of experiencing popular and musical cultures in their true dominion of clubs and pubs, ‘out of the house in public spaces’ (p 280). I would suggest that these assumptions are in fact both gendered and generational. In talking about the programmes, far from differentiating themselves, the women actively situated themselves within the domestic rhythms of daily family life and rarely talked about their musical consumption in public terms. Only Fiona and Hilary went on to extrapolate their memories of the programmes into what they did when they went out, and in both cases this related to their appearance rather than the musical culture of where they went or, even, what they did when they got there. Fiona recalled wearing a long parka and pulling her skirt down to make it look longer so her father would not disapprove, before running round the corner to where her boyfriend waited with his scooter, hitching her skirt back up above the knee and jumping on the back of the bike. Hilary’s recollection of an R&B club in Derby which she used to attend revolved entirely around the other girls’ hairstyles and clothes, and she actually related the fashions back to television when she exclaimed ‘Oh, it was so *Top of the Pops!*’ As previously mentioned, the men I spoke to in the Pop Up TV Pop Shop did talk extensively about their public engagement with wider youth culture and not about their lives at home. Additionally, while the earlier music programmes may have been conceived to be family friendly (Hill 1991), the women interviewed recalled the consternation of their parents when viewing, and have a clear sense that these programmes were for them as teenage girls, and not for their parents. The relatively greater financial and social freedom that boys have traditionally enjoyed (McRobbie 1991) means that they possibly did spend more time out of the home enjoying popular culture as teenagers, and as a result perhaps watched less television than girls. But for

many younger teenage girls, and particularly for some women from older generations who were likely to be subjected to greater parental supervision, music on television offered their best means of exposure and access to youth cultures, to music, and to fashion.

### ***Conclusion***

From my interviews, we can begin to get a clear sense that, within this particular teenage and feminine culture, there are certain ways of being that can give girls an enhanced cultural position amongst their peers, or within the *field* of teenage girlhood. This is apparent in Fiona's pride at being a 'leader of fashion' among her friends, and also in the way that others recall the importance of the shows in enabling them to know the Top Twenty, to see the 'big moments', and to be able to discuss the programmes with their friends. Beverley Skeggs has rejected the idea of *habitus*, suggesting that recourse to femininity is actually more performative in its nature. In her research on working class teenage girls, she saw their feminine practice as something they 'did', as the only form of cultural capital available to them, rather something that was internalised as an identity, because the consequences of appearing to reject that femininity were potentially devastating, leading to a loss of 'respectability' (Skeggs 1997). The women's participation in programmes such as *The Tube* or *Ready, Steady, Go!* is not entirely about feminine practice, although such practice explains the appropriation of role models such as McGowan and Yates, who exuded a kind of femininity that girls wanted to recreate for themselves to deploy within their own field. However, in neither case was it a type of femininity that teenage girl's parents or other authority figures might recognise either as femininity or as a desirable trait. Fiona's memory of hiding the length of her skirt from her father suggests that recourse to this

femininity had the potential to cause loss of respectability in his eyes, that Fiona recognised this and was keen to avoid that outcome. Yet, in the wider public domain, and certainly within the field of teenage girlhood, the potential for loss of respectability was a risk that girls were prepared to take.

The women came from varied social backgrounds and were watching these programmes in different decades of the twentieth century. As such, there are a variety of different *habitués* at play in the interview data. One aspect that is particularly striking is that social class does not appear to be a factor in how the women I interviewed used music programming. In this case, I would suggest that maintaining ‘respectability’, as defined by an older generation, was not as important as operating within and belonging to this feminine, teenage culture. In the women’s extensive discussion about the access to music and associated cultures that these programmes offered, they indicate another means of cultural capital that is not wholly predicated upon a traditional feminine performativity, and one which receives its legitimacy from within the field itself, from other teenage girls, rather than from more traditional and authoritarian sources. Valerie Walkerdine has interrogated the easy application of theories of resistance to working class girls’ behaviour, suggesting that what is often naively and lazily perceived as ‘resistance’ is, in fact, a mechanism for coping (Walkerdine 1997). In light of these women’s recollections of pop music programming, I begin to wonder whether this is actually a commonality of the teenage girl experience, and possibly adolescence generally, across social class and over time. Adolescents ‘manage’, and they do so by appearing to fit in and striving to belong.

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<sup>i</sup> The project's purpose was to begin a sustained historical analysis of television for women in the period 1947-1989 from both production and reception perspectives. Dr Helen Wheatley, Dr Rachel Moseley and Dr Mary Irwin investigated the production and archival aspect of the project at the University of Warwick, whilst Dr Helen Wood and I carried out the audience research at De Montfort University. (AHF01725/1)

<sup>ii</sup> I used Bourdieu's model of social class (1987) to identify the various fields that the women inhabited and the processes by which they had arrived there. In a demographic profile and more casually throughout the interview I asked about education, employment, parental employment, housing and domestic and cultural habits, as well as trying to gain a sense of how each woman understood their own class position.

<sup>iii</sup> I did not receive any responses to my call to interview from ethnic minority women. Furthermore, the De Montfort University press office approached magazines such as *The Voice* and *Asian Eye* with the press release that was run by other publications and neither chose to run it. This is highly suggestive of a different relationship with television within ethnic communities which would benefit from further investigation.

<sup>iv</sup> These interviews took place between June 2011 and March 2012. Some of the comments women made about the male presenters of *Top of the Pops* have taken on a different character in the wake of news stories regarding abuse of minors, Jimmy Savile and the working culture of the BBC during the period.

<sup>v</sup> *Ready Steady Go!* was produced by record producer and talent manager Vicky Wickham. Twenty years later Andrea Wonfor, Tyne Tees' head of youth and children's programmes, launched *The Tube* for Channel 4.

<sup>vi</sup> 'How Ready Steady Go! Soundtracked a Revolution'

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2011/may/29/ready-steady-go-meltdown-ray-davies> (accessed 20/2/13) describes the choice of McGowan as a presenter on the programme

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### ***Television Programmes***

*Oh Boy!* (ABC, 1958-1959)

*Ready, Steady, Go!* (Associated Rediffusion Television, 1963-1966)

*Six-Five Special* (BBC, 1957-1958)

*The Old Grey Whistle Test* (BBC, 1971-1987)

*The Tube* (Tyne Tees Television, 1982-1987)

*Top of the Pops* (BBC, 1964-2006)

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## Appendix

Collie, H and Irwin, M (2013) 'Television for Women' - "The Weekend Starts here": Young Women, Pop Music Television and Identity'. In *Screen* 54 (2), 262-269

Central to the design of the project 'A History of Television for Women, 1947-1989' was the incorporation of a rarely undertaken research method, one in which audience, textual and production research approaches are used in synergy. This progressive research approach has allowed interview data to direct our research route into the archives, and has created some surprising project findings. The academic field of gendered viewing preferences has historically been skewed by an over-investigation of genres such as soap opera and other dramas.<sup>vi</sup> This research wanted to interrogate what constitutes television for women from industry, academic and audience perspectives. During a series of interviews conducted with women about their memories of watching television, designed to uncover which programmes women felt had particularly resonated with them during the period of interest, many of the programmes that women have spoken to us about have not always been the ones we might expect or categorise as 'television for women'. The interviews have revealed, for instance, complex and passionate relationships formed around pop music programming during women's negotiation of their adolescent years. This has been surprisingly consistent across women of different generations.

The significance of this unexpected finding to feminist television scholarship lies in its illumination of the consequences of how the initial research question and method will frame the data which that research creates. By asking more open questions about which programmes mattered, rather than following in the path of academic assumptions about gendered taste and preferences, other programme types that may have been missed become visible. From that point, archival and textual research can begin to assess what it was within the programmes that might have prompted such a response, alongside looking at programming institutionally designated as being 'for women'. Here, we rather unusually present the audience research first, detailing how it led us back to a consideration of the texts under discussion and thereby prioritising the framing of our women viewers.

Academic investigation of the relationships that young women might have with popular music has focussed on fandom in its varying forms,<sup>vi</sup> and on media representation of female rock and pop stars and considerations of such stars' problematic experiences of

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a frequently misogynist music industry.<sup>vi</sup> The particular relationships identified in our research that young women have with pop music programmes have been afforded little consideration. Sheila Whiteley's work, for example, while dealing extensively with questions of gendered engagements with music and the music industry, pays little attention to music as broadcast on television.<sup>vi</sup> Critical engagement with the television audience of popular music programming has been rare and largely carried out from the perspective of theorising only the text,<sup>vi</sup> which sometimes prevents it from recognising the varied and complex reasons that an audience might have for engaging with music programming besides the music itself. It has typically failed to recognise the differing gendered viewing positions that might exist, treating the entire youth audience as one homogenous group. While Simon Frith and Sean Cubitt's work on youth engagement with *Top of the Pops* (BBC, 1964-2006) and its disappointments and limitations is significant, for example, it does not address the potential for gendered differences in viewing and invokes an implicitly masculine spectator as typical. By relying solely on textual analysis, Frith's work does not recognise the varied and complex reasons that an audience might have for engaging with music programming besides the music itself. As such, this type of work tends to preference music over television as a category for analysis, with a decided concentration upon the limitations of television as a musical medium, rather than investigating what it is about television that might transform or even enhance the audience's engagement with music through a visual medium.

The extant scholarship on women's identification with female pop and rock stars, such as Madonna and The Spice Girls, connects suggestively with what we discovered in interviews about the symbolic importance of female artists and especially female presenters for women watching music television.<sup>vi</sup> This is not apparent in the commentary offered by Frith and Cubitt. Karen Lury's work on female engagement with *Top of the Pops* is especially useful here. In her account of her connection with Tracey Ullman, whose use of the hairbrush microphone is for Lury an acute and knowing celebration of her and other young women's own relationship with pop music and female performance, Lury hints at the significance of this gendered performance for a female audience. She further shows how different viewing groups might have a different relationship with the programme, "I understood Tracey Ullman's performance because I related to the myth of *Top of the Pops* in a particular way – because I am British, a woman, and had watched *Top of the Pops* for many years."<sup>vi</sup> Our research builds on Lury's work in our own exploration of the gendered way in which British

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women related to the myths of well-loved pop music programmes from the 1960s to the 1980s.

This study focuses on three key music programmes: *Ready Steady Go!* (ITV, 1963-66), *Top of the Pops*, and *The Tube* (Channel 4, 1982-87). These programmes have emerged from the interviews as particularly significant. The women's personal accounts of watching pop music programmes are considered alongside analysis of the programmes themselves to interrogate what it was about the series which made them such an important part of adolescent female life and to reflect on the benefits of conducting audience work alongside archival research.

Women's attachment to music programming was the first major trend to emerge from the project's research, with many of the initial interview correspondences packed with memories about *Top of the Pops*, *Ready Steady Go!* and *The Tube*. Once the interviews were underway, it emerged that these programmes had been central to many of the women's teenage viewing. This was a genre that they had continued to make time for, at a time in their lives when other viewing fell away as social and educational commitments began to encroach on their viewing time.

The reasons women gave for enjoying the programmes were multiple. As teenage girls, the access to musical acts that all three programmes offered was extremely important. To miss a broadcast and, therefore, the most current music, was in many cases likened to 'social suicide'. Even *Top of the Pops*, which was widely denigrated across the interviews as "boring" and out of touch, was also described within those same interviews, as "a religion" and "unmissable". The prospect of a favourite song or artist performance was too delicious to miss, with many of the women recounting the lengths they went to in order to record their favourites for free either on VHS or audio recording equipment. Performances by big musical acts and style and fashion tips were important to the women who were interviewed. For Sylvia (54), growing up in a low income family in the East End of London, being able to record music off the television or radio was the only way she could afford to have the latest tracks. Although not the only means of access to music, which could be easily heard on the radio, music programming was an important means of access to visual aspects of musical culture. This is an aspect of televised musical performance which Frith, for instance, overlooks. His analysis does not consider that watching music on television offers an opportunity to pay attention to the visual style and self-presentation of performers and presenters.

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Viewing was also a shared experience, either during the act of watching the programmes or, more frequently, in dissecting the programme at a later date in the playground, the office or the dancehall. In part, this shared experience was about discussing hairstyles and clothes which might be recreated and practised in the privacy of the bedroom before a Friday night out dancing, echoing Angela McRobbie's work on the private nature of teenage girl's culture.<sup>vi</sup> Fiona (64), who grew up in Aberdeen in the 1950s and 60s viewed *Ready Steady Go!* as her only access to fashion due to the remoteness of where she lived, noting that often the newsagent did not stock the magazines that catered to her tastes. The importance of these programmes in teenage girls' adolescent social education is clear, with many women citing female acts such as Cilla Black and Dusty Springfield as influencing their own style. But it was Cathy McGowan and Paula Yates, the female presenters of *Ready Steady Go!* and *The Tube*, whom girls wanted to emulate. Fiona vividly recalled being a 'leader of fashion' among her friends by copying McGowan's look, while Dawn (42) remembered a similar relationship with Paula Yates, whose style strongly influenced Dawn's own clothing, make-up and hairstyle choices. There is a strong sense of the women performing their gender through this appropriation of overtly feminine styling<sup>vi</sup>. In the way the women talk about the period of their lives in which they engaged with music television as a very distinct time; with little that links it to their lives after adolescence, it could possibly be seen as a time of 'trying out' femininities which may or may not have relevance to their adult years. These were not isolated instances; when asked whether there were any television personalities of the time that they had wanted to emulate, McGowan and Yates were the most common responses. For the young women watching, the appearance and performances of these strong confident female presenters was significant in helping them to construct their own distinct feminine identities.

The influence of female presenters extended beyond their physical appearance. When asked about role models many of the interviewees again cited McGowan and Yates, rather than selecting characters from soap operas, drama or other traditionally 'feminine' genres. The mere presence of young women, who acted with a confident and modern femininity on television, made them important role models to young women, with a clear suggestion that McGowan and Yates were understood in some way as "like them".

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In her work on women's relationship with female cinematic stars of the Hollywood Golden Age, Jackie Stacey has constructed a complex and nuanced account of the pleasures of cinematic identification and the processes of the formations of feminine identities. While on one hand the women she studied valued difference which could transport them into a world where their desires might be fulfilled on the other, they valued similarity for enabling them to recognise qualities they already had.<sup>vi</sup> In their identification with the female presenters of the music programmes the women in our sample demonstrate a similar relationship. McGowan and Yates captured girls' imagination and attention because they were less 'starry' than the featured musicians and more familiar through their weekly appearance on television. Their positions as television personalities, rather than film stars, made them just glamorous enough to want to emulate, but their position was not so out of reach for the girls to possibly achieve as the Hollywood stars of Stacey's work or the female A-list musical stars of the time, as indicated by McGowan's route into the glamorous world of television. This level of identification reiterates the research cited earlier on women's relationships with female performers, and the creation of gendered identities. E. Ann Kaplan has indicated the many ways that a highly feminised cultural icon such as Madonna might provide young women with a particular definition of femininity, so to an adolescent might the very particular, and potentially more achievable, femininities represented by Yates and McGowan.<sup>vi</sup> The contrast with conversation around *Top of the Pops* is stark. With no regular female presenters, girls looked to the acts and the audience for style information. Tracey (52) initially mentioned *Top of the Pops* as an important way to keep up with the latest fashions, but as she continued to talk about the programme she came to realise that the audience were in fact, "...very old fashioned. Tank tops, boring T-shirts, A-line skirts and things like that." The relative absence of female presenters in *Top of the Pops* was indicated on more than one occasion as a reason not to identify with the programme, and its middle-aged male presenters were perceived as 'cheesy' and even sexually predatory.<sup>vi</sup> The presence of McGowan and Yates in what these women recognised, even as girls and young women, as a male-dominated genre, was what drew them to the programmes.

These audience responses prompted an analysis of texts that we may not have initially investigated under the broader construction of 'television for women'. Viewing available surviving episodes and extracts from *Ready Steady Go!*, *Top of the Pops* and *The Tube* allows for a comparative analysis which explores the textual invitations behind

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the memories and opinions recorded in the interviews. Equally important is some understanding of the production history from which the series emerged in order to locate these relationships within the broader social and cultural context in which they were received.

*Ready Steady Go!* was produced by Associated Rediffusion at London's Kingsway studio and broadcast live on ITV at 6pm on Fridays. It embodied the youthful, exuberant spirit of a nascent 'swinging' London. Piecing together the programme experience from available archive recordings, what is especially striking is the footage of confident, dynamic young women dancing with boyfriends, girlfriends or simply by themselves, absorbed by and caught up in the music and the experience.<sup>vi</sup> Indeed, on *Ready Steady Go!* young women were very clearly at the centre of the action. Cathy McGowan, who worked in the offices at Associated Rediffusion, had responded initially to an advert to find a 'typical' teenager to act as an advisor to the programme.<sup>vi</sup> She was not only an influential and stylish trendsetter, but primarily a *Ready Steady Go!* host, with the enviable weekly task of interviewing top groups from the Beatles to the Rolling Stones. Cilla Black, Helen Shapiro, Lulu and Sandie Shaw were just some of the high profile young female performers who starred on the programme. Dusty Springfield had an especially high *Ready Steady Go!* profile, both as performer and as a guest presenter. In March 1965 Springfield, an avid champion of US rhythm and blues, organised and presented a *Ready Steady Go!* Motown special, featuring among others the girl groups The Supremes and Martha and the Vandellas. The programme's producer was another young woman Vicky Wickham. The centrality of women to the programme's creation enabled *Ready Steady Go!* to offer an address which catered for the needs and desires of a female audience, particularly in terms of fashion and style as recalled by interviewees. This gendered address is also absolutely clear from an examination of extra-textual materials in listings publications such as the *TV Times*, which reveals that the programmes were being marketed to young girls as key sources for fashion and style. A December 1964 edition of *TV Times*, for example, offered female viewers the chance to send for a pattern to make a dress modelled by singer and *Ready Steady Go!* performer Marianne Faithful.<sup>vi</sup> McGowan featured regularly in *TV Times* throughout 1963 and 1964 in items on *Ready Steady Go!*, presented both as fashion icon and simultaneously as a down to earth young woman willing to share tips and advice on how to emulate her coveted look and style.<sup>vi</sup>

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Twenty years later Channel 4 launched *The Tube*, dubbed 'a *Ready, Steady Go!* for the 1980s'.<sup>vi</sup> Once again a very strong female presence was evident. Andrea Wonfor, Tyne Tees' head of youth and children's programmes, had come up with the original idea for the live series which she launched in 1982.<sup>vi</sup> Paula Yates, Muriel Gray and later Leslie Ash were among its young female presenters. Watching episodes of episodes of *The Tube* - as with *Ready Steady Go!* - what stands out are the confident young women who fill the studio audience. Like their 1960s peers, they are dressed in the latest 1980s street fashions and can be seen dancing, laughing with friends and very obviously commenting on the dress sense and style of presenters, bands and other audience members.

Paula Yates is a dominant presence, using her own brand of subversive and disarming femininity to orchestrate chaotic, edgy interviews and it is significant that it is her style that the interviewees related to, rather than the less overtly feminine look of another female presenter Muriel Gray. Yates is dressed provocatively in a flouncy low-cut ball gown while very evidently and proudly pregnant. (November 5<sup>th</sup> 1982). In a period where pregnancy was discreetly veiled in generously cut smocks, best exemplified by Princess Diana's billowing maternity wear, Yates displays hers with confidence and relish. Again, pursuing the extra-textual address of this programme as a result of comments made by the women we interviewed, we find, for example, that the *TV Times* from September 1984 featured a lavish colour spread in which Paula Yates was photographed wearing her 'post-punk' take on the early 1980s craze for tartan, next to an image of Diana, wearing the same fabric in a much more traditional, feminine design. Yates has created an individual look, placing bold, clashing tartans together in marked contrast with Diana's conventional one-coloured tartan dress.<sup>vi</sup>

In one episode, Yates flirts outrageously with a blushing, clearly lost for words Mick Jagger, telling him she may have to be "hosed down" in the presence of his huge sex appeal (December 10th 1982). She asks cool American indie band Wall of Voodoo if they will be performing without the suggestively shaped British confectionery Walnut Whips down their trousers this time. She makes the tongue-in-cheek suggestion that in previous performances they may have had recourse to such aids to enhance their masculinity. There is no question that it is Yates who has the upper hand in these encounters. As with *Ready Steady Go!*, *The Tube* showcases many female performers: Alison Moyet, Hazel O'Connor, The Belle Stars and Annie Lennox are just some of the



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young female musicians interviewed by Yates and Gray across the series in 1982-3. The women discuss music and the pop industry as engaged professionals and performers, very far from the lazy image of 'screaming fans' so often used to denote women's relationship with pop music. In the rise of these female presenters we see women moving into the roles of cultural intermediaries presenting and interpreting popular music.

*Top of the Pops*, for our interviewees, offered the least satisfactory viewing experience: they watched almost despite the presenters and the style of the programme. Its production context goes some way to explaining why this might have been the case, certainly for the series in the 1970s, which was a decade recalled by many of the interviewees. It was produced in this period by Robin Nash, who had worked widely in BBC Light Entertainment on everything from *The Basil Brush Show* (1968-80) to sitcom *Terry and June* (1979-87). Nash had neither specialist background nor particular interest in pop music. *Top of the Pops* was presented by thirtysomething male Radio 1 DJs chosen because they were nationally recognised figures. The stylisation, framing and mode of discourse performed by presenters, did not seem to address the growing confidence of young women around their fashion, consumption and sexuality in the era.

Watching extant *Top of The Pops* from the mid-1970s, what is most noticeable about the young women in the studio is the contrast with the *Ready Steady Go!* and *The Tube* audiences, with very subdued dancing and participation in evidence. Most frequently we see them grouped sheepishly and passively around the hosting DJ and subjected to patronising remarks about their interest in the groups performing, or the DJs themselves (who were often at least fifteen years older than the audience). In the broadcast of 13th January 1977, the diminutive 39 year old David Hamilton mock-chastises a surrounding group of teenage girls, who he suggests might have some kind of sexual interest in him, saying, "Leave me alone - do you mind not pulling my trouser leg?" For young women watching *Top of the Pops* there were neither role models, nor active performance and participation roles and spaces in which they could imagine themselves. Occasions where women did perform often seem like an opportunity to display women. The programme's female dance troupes, Pan's People and Legs & Co, performances did not resonate with the interviewees who did not talk about them at all during interview. Interestingly, the men we spoke to about their memories at the project's pop-up shop did frequently recall the female dance troupes,

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further strengthening suspicions about which audience the programme sought to address.<sup>vi</sup>

In this article we hope to have brought attention to the previously under-explored relationship between young women and popular music on the small screen, identifying the crucial role of pop music programming in the development and negotiation of teen femininities. Our findings have emerged as the result of a research method which has given equal weight to both audience and archival research, and which has allowed audience data to direct our path into the archives. Women's relationship with music programmes might not have emerged at all had we continued to work with notions of what constitutes 'television for women' when those notions are constructed from production and textual analysis alone. Yet, once archival research was pointed in this direction, a rich seam of material was discovered in relation to how the programmes were marketed and their mode of address. We would suggest that as a research method this approach opens up important questions around gender and television genre, indicating the complexity of the ways in which we need to re-conceptualise the notion of gendered television.

<sup>vi</sup> Mary Ellen Brown, *Soap Opera and Women's Talk: The Pleasure of Resistance*, (California: Sage, 1994); Dorothy Hobson, *Crossroads: The Drama of a Soap Opera*, (London: Methuen, 1982); Tania Modleski, 'The search for tomorrow in today's soap operas: notes on a feminine narrative form', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 1 (1979).

<sup>vi</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess and Gloria Jacobs, 'Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun', in Lisa A. Lewis (ed.) *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 84-106; Gayle Wald, '"I Want It That Way": Teenybopper Music and the Girling of Boy Bands', *Genders*, 35 (2002), [http://www.genders.org/g35/g35\\_wald.html](http://www.genders.org/g35/g35_wald.html).

<sup>vi</sup> Virginia W. Cooper, 'Women in popular music: A quantitative analysis of feminine images over time', *Sex Roles*, Vol 13, no. 9-10, pp 499-506 (1985); Lisa L Rhodes, *Electric Ladyland: Women and Rock Culture*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

<sup>vi</sup> Sheila Whiteley (ed), *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*, (London: Routledge, 1997); Sheila Whiteley, *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity*, (Oxford: Routledge, 2000).

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<sup>vi</sup> Sean Cubitt, 'Top of the Pops': the Politics of the Living Room', Len Masterson (ed), *Television*

*Mythologies: Stars, Shows and Signs* (London:Routledge, 1984); Simon Frith, 'Look! Hear! The uneasy relationship of music and television', *Popular Music*, vol. 21, no. 3 (2002), pp. 277-290.

<sup>vi</sup> Suzanna Danuta Walters, *Material Girls: Making Sense of Feminist Cultural Theory* (Berkley:University of California Press, 1995); Dafna Lemish, 'Spice Girls' Talk: A Case Study in the Development of Gendered Identity', in Sherrie A. Inness (ed) *Millennium Girls: Todays Girls Around the World* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998); Jane D. Brown, 'The Effects of Race, Gender, and Fandom on Audience Interpretations of Madonna's Music Videos', *Journal of Communication*, vol. 40, no. 2 (1990), pp. 88-102; C Schwichtenburg (ed) *The Madonna Connection: Representation Politics, Subcultural Identities, and Cultural Theory*, (Colorado: Westview, 1993)

<sup>vi</sup> Karen Lury, *British Youth Television: Cynicism and Enchantment*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.45-6.

<sup>vi</sup> Angela McRobbie, *Feminism and Youth Culture*, (London:MacMillan, 2000), p16.

<sup>vi</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1990)

<sup>vi</sup> Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship*, (London:Routledge, 1994) p. 128.

<sup>vi</sup> Kaplan, E. A (1993) 'Madonna Politics: Perversion, Repression or Subversion?', C Schwichtenburg (ed) *The Madonna Connection: Representation Politics, Subcultural Identities, and Cultural Theory*, (Colorado:Westview, 1993).

<sup>vi</sup> The implicitly uncomfortable and unsavourily sexual overtones of the relationship promoted by middle-aged DJs with young female pop fans is commented upon briefly in this article. On 3rd October 2012, *Exposure*, an ITV current affairs series, named former *Top of the Pops* presenter Jimmy Savile as a paedophile and relentless sexual predator. The police enquiry Operation Yewtree was convened in the wake of the allegations to investigate alleged sexual abuse and the sexual abuse of children. A number of television personalities including former Top of The Pops presenter Dave Lee Travis were detained and questioned in relation to this.

<sup>vi</sup> *Ready Steady Go!* tx 4.10.1963; *Ready Steady Go!* tx 20.11.1964.

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<sup>vi</sup> 'How *Ready Steady Go!* Soundtracked a

Revolution' <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2011/may/29/ready-steady-go-meltdown-ray-davies>

(accessed 20/2/13) describes the choice of McGowan as a presenter on the programme.

<sup>vi</sup> 'Fashion Wise' (Marianne Faithful models), *TV Times* (Dec 12-18, 1964), p. 9.

<sup>vi</sup> These articles such as 'The with-it world of Mods and Rockers', 1-7 Dec 1963 (8-9) *TV Times* front cover 29 Dec- Jan 4th 1963, '*Ready Steady Go!* - Having a Ball' April 5th – 11th 1964 (3-5) all featured articles and pictures of the fashions and lifestyles of McGowan and the *Ready Steady Go!* in-crowd.

<sup>vi</sup> Jeremy Isaacs told Malcolm Gerrie, joint producer of *The Tube*, in a meeting about developing the series that Mike Bolland, commissioner of youth programmes at Channel 4, had said the series would be a '*Ready Steady Go!* for the 1980s'. Malcolm Gerrie interview with Maggie Brown cited in Maggie Brown, *A Licence to be Different: The Story of Channel Four*, (London: BFI, 2007), p. 49.

<sup>vi</sup> Six months before launch going through the tea chests full of discarded submissions, Bolland found what was to become *The Tube*. Andrea Wonfor, a Tyne Tees executive whose work he admired, had sent in a proposal for six half hour rock shows with the title *Jamming*. Andy Park the Music Commissioner, had turned it down but Bolland thought what, 'What if for six months we went live'. Mark Bolland interview with Maggie Brown cited in *A Licence to be Different*, p.49.

<sup>vi</sup> 'What Paula Has in Common with Princess Diana', *TV Times* (Sep 29-Oct 5 1984: 4-5).

<sup>vi</sup> During May 2012, the project set up the Pop Up TV Pop Shop in Coventry city centre as part of our impact agenda. The public were invited in to look at our work and to share their own memories of music pop programming with us.